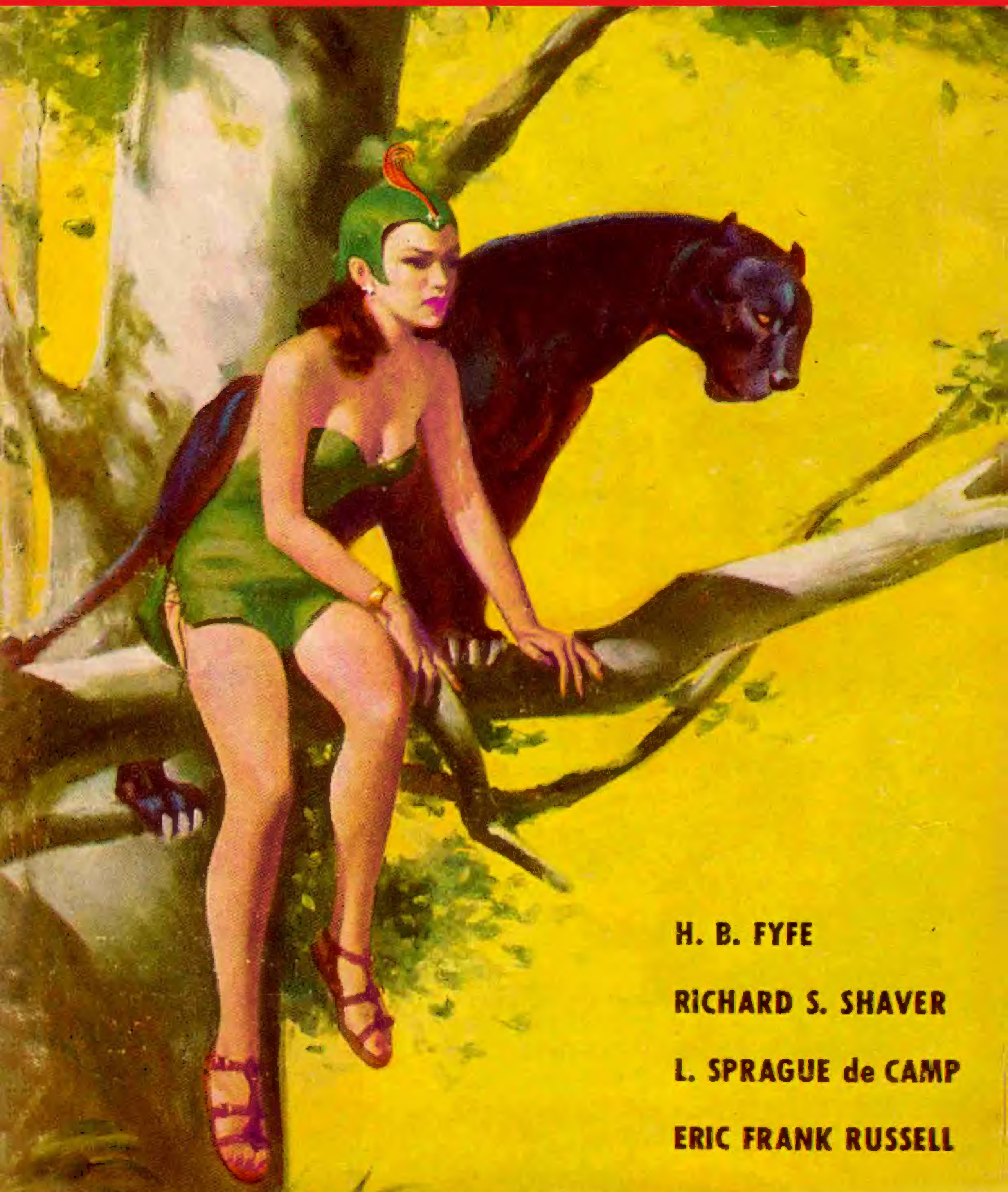
OTHER WORLDS

JANUARY
1953
35¢



H. B. FYFE

RICHARD S. SHAVER

L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

The People Who Make OTHER WORLDS

No. 9

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

Dear Bea:

I have an almost pathological dislike of biographical sketches. The dreary humor, the inane photograph of anybody who might be anybody but is striving to look like somebody, the pathetic straining to ingratiate oneself with cold-eyed, fast-shooting readers, the desperate juggling with words and phrases to make a quite ordinary person seem at least slightly extraordinary.

Three times have I fallen into this trap solely because I lacked the guts to displease an editor, especially one of the delightful sex. I sent my fingerprints, nail-clippings and best pair of shoes to FANTASY PRESS, my birth certificate and soul-searchings to WORLD YOUTH, my innards quick-frozen and cellophane-wrapped to BLUE BOOK. What remains is a man-shaped vacuum surrounded by skin. I refuse to let you have that. I go on strike—what's left of me. And I'm willing to bet that 90% of your readers couldn't care less.

Way I look at it is this: whenever I'm sufficiently careless or stupid or incompetent to turn out a lousy yarn the readers will think me a prize stinker no matter what I say or how angelic I try to appear in a pic. Conversely, if I manage one that really

Concluded on Page 159

OTHER WORLDS

STORIES

Somewhere A Voice 6
Eric Frank Russell (17,000 words)

Fast Passage 46
H. B. Fyfe (15,000 words)

Lost Continents IV 79
L. Sprague de Camp (9,200 words)

Beyond the Barrier 100
Richard S. Shaver (Pt. 3—15,000 words)

FEATURES

Editorial 4

The Man From Tomorrow 140

Nebulosities 144

Personals 146

About Our Front Cover 148

About Our Back Cover 149

Letters 150

Other Worlds Book Shelf 160

JANUARY

1953

ISSUE No. 25

EDITORS

Ray Palmer

Bea Mahaffey

ART DIRECTOR

Malcolm H. Smith

Front Cover:
H. W. McCauley

Back Cover:
Hannes Bok

On Sale the First Week of Every Month

CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY, 806 Dempster Street, Evanston, Illinois

Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Evanston, Illinois. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Printed in U.S.A. by the W. F. Hall Printing Company of Chicago, Illinois. Distributed by American News Company, Inc. of New York. No responsibility is undertaken for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork. Return envelope and sufficient return postage is required. Basic rates for accepted material, 1c per word. Advertising rates at request. Subscriptions: 12 issues, $3.00; 24 issues, $6.00.

....Editorial...

OVER in India they have a rather restful philosophy. Among other things, they attach great importance to such things as making your mind a complete blank, of reaching a point where no thought stirs through your gray matter; leaving it completely open and receptive to anything that may come to it from the outside. This condition of absolute emptiness of the brain is said to be very difficult to achieve—only the great ones can do it.

All we ask is: have they ever seated themselves before a typewriter to write an editorial?

Over here, we have some rather strange things too. For instance, we sit down on the 24th of September to write joyfully and hopefully of the fact that "here we are at January already!" 1953! Another year stares us in the face! And like all the rest, it is the year of destiny! OTHER WORLDS is entering a new year of publication. We began in 1949. Can we believe it! Is good old OW already spanning *five* years? Incredible! 1949 - 1950 - 1951 - 1952 - 1953. Yes, that's five. But what liars figures are! Actually we've used up three chronological years. We published our first issue three years ago. August 1, 1949, our November issue appeared. 1151 days today. 24 editorials ago. Approximately 1,920,000 words printed. Dead words now; past; gone.

January, 1953. The year of the big blowup—if we take the prophets seriously. But even if it blows up, at least it's new. Beginning approximately 960,000 new words. Let's make them good, huh? Let's see, how are we starting? Eric Frank Russell, 17,000 words. *Good?* Why, we're terrific! We're really off to a grand start! How about other than words—covers? Bok on the back cover. More terrific. McCauley on the front; the famous Mac-girl again. Other authors: L. Sprague de Camp, Richard S. Shaver, H. B. Fyfe . . .

Looks like a big year!

Now all we need is a good editorial . . .

Over in India they sit on nails . . . maybe we should sit on nails. Wonder why they sit on nails? Or is that a lie like all the rest of the stuff we hear about India? If they *do* sit on nails, it could be for only one reason—to attract attention. That's our big trouble—we are just a bunch of children trying to attract attention. We want to be noticed. We want to be the center of attraction. Especially we editors. We want everybody to read our magazine and tell us how it's the best in the field, the top, the leader. And we scan our circulation figures and compare them with other magazines, and claim they are the

highest. Some of us lie about that, Unfortunately we aren't in a very good position to lie about it, because we don't even print as many as some others sell. Take that new upstart, *Fantastic*, for instance. Might even sell a quarter of a million!

Wonder what *that* means? 1953. The year of the big blowup. Well, it looks to this editor like the big year for science fiction. It looks like the year in which we begin to overwhelm the publishing field. It looks like, to put it briefly, we're in.

Everybody's gonna read science fiction!

And with all those critics, we'd better be good! The day of the casual science fiction writer is over—the field is going to be invaded by hard-working guys who are accustomed to punching out big things. Real experience and ability is coming into the picture. Experience in other fields of writing, which means the general color of science fiction will inevitably have a rather new tint laid over it. Change will be rapid. Some of the old guard will scream in indignation. And the new guard will say, let them scream.

We can drop the argument right now as to which magazine is the best —there're going to be too many of them, and each one with a great big "made in the boom" sign on it. Imitation by the carload, dozens of magazines impossible to distinguish from other dozens of magazines. No character, no personality.

That's the thing we regret about the "big time." It's a rat race, and all the little mice are dutifully imitating the rats, so they can be rats too. Time was when science fiction was a medium of ideas, of imagination, of science-projected-into-the-future. It was pure genius; it was creative. An idea once done was inviolate —it couldn't be done again without attracting to itself scornful charges of ideological plagiarism. Now all the little pigs will curl their tails the same way.

Right now, before we get drawn into the whirlpool, we're going to make a resolve: we're going to live up to our title, OTHER WORLDS. No matter how far science fiction goes into the production-line stage, with all the bolts in the same place on each production, *we* are going to be faithful to our title. We'll always be searching for *other* worlds, for *different* worlds. In a way, we're challenging that big monster, whose name we don't know, but who somehow reminds us of sitting on nails. We renounce the prostitution of our originality for the laurels of the big-time, for big-circulation, for following-the-leader down the broad highway of the "popular." We're going to continue to pioneer. We're going to leave the heavily populated thoroughfare because we hate crowds, especially crowds who all wear the same color tie, the same style hats, say the same "clever" words, mouth the same platitudes—all because it is the "thing everybody is doing."

You know, that's what's wrong with our civilization: the other day

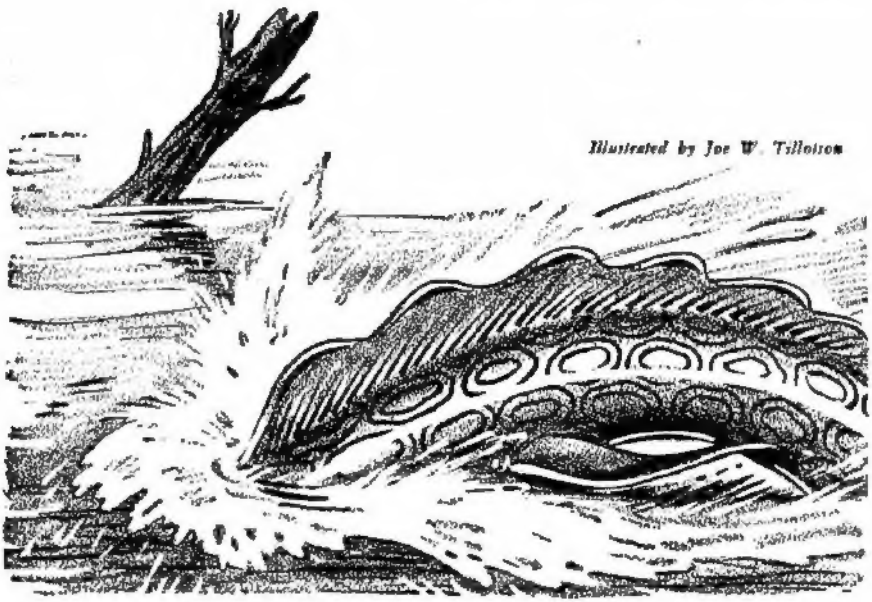
(Concluded on page 144)

TILLOTSON

Nine survivors emerged from the life-boat onto hostile Valmia. Why these, Bill Mallet asked, when with two exceptions — three, if you counted Feeny — you'd be hard put to find a more useless group of fellow-castaways.

SOMEWHERE A VOICE

By Eric Frank Russell



Illustrated by Joe W. Tilloison

THEY crawled, walked, tottered or jumped out of the battered little lifeboat, each according to his or her mental or physical condition. There were nine of them. The lifeboat was designed to hold twenty but only nine emerged from it and only two remained within it. These two were dead.

All around towered the tangled jungle of a world notoriously hostile to their kind. High above burned the intense blue furnace of a sun that lent their faces a ghastly glow and made them peer through lids narrowed to the minimum. The air was thick, cloying, full of vegetable smells and vaguely reptilian but unidentifiable odors. The jungle brooded in utter silence, waiting, waiting, waiting.

First Officer Alex Symes automatically took charge. Nobody disputed his right. Tall, gray-haired, laconic, he was the senior-ranking member of the party. Not that rank counted for much in these dire circumstances; or if it did it wouldn't be for long. A corpse has no promotional status.

Facing the others, he informed, "Near as I can make out, this is Valmia, sixth planet of ZM17." He threw a brief, narrow-eyed glance at the fiery orb above them. "Don't take it we're lucky because we aren't. There are a million far better places in the cosmos."

"We're alive," put in Max Kessler, captain of the third watch. "That's something."

"The problem is to stay alive," countered Symes. "And that's something else!" His gray eyes went over them, studying, estimating. "Valmia has a rescue-station under a dome on the fortieth parallel. Our only hopes lie in reaching it." He waited a bit for that to sink in, added, "I reckon we've between seventeen hundred and two thousand miles to go."

"Say forty miles a day," hazarded Kessler. "Fifty days—we'll make it."

"Tvorty milers!" echoed Mrs. Mihailovik, her broad, puddeny face suffused with dismay. She felt for and grasped her husband's hand. "Grigor, ve nod able are to do tvorty milers."

The dumpy and equally puddenfaced Grigor patted her thick fingers. "Is best for to vait und tsee."

Watching the pair of them, Bill Mallet decided that fate could and should have arranged things much better. Salvation seemed to function on too haphazard a basis to leave room for common justice. A lot of *real* people had gone under for keeps when that superfast lump of rock smacked the *Star Queen* and split her open from end to end. Ainsworth, Alcock, Banks, Barmer, Blundell, Casartelli, Casey, Corrigan, a regiment of them, all one hundred percent people.

And look at the useless rabble that had got away. Only three of them were worth the lick of an earth-cow. Four if you counted Feeny, the late Captain Ridgway's Irish terrier. As deputy engineer of the first watch and two hundred pounds of lavishly tattooed muscle to boot, he, Bill Mal-

let, had some call to be picked for survival by whoever or whatever did the picking. The same applied to Symes and Kessler, both good men and true, skilled, white and literate.

As for the rest, well, there were infinitely more deserving cases now floating bloated and lifeless in space. These Mihailoviks, for instance. Emigrating from some village of mud hovels to which they'd been no ornaments. Squat, myopic and stupid. Elderly, ugly and devoid of all merit. Not able even to speak plain English.

First day out he'd passed Mrs. Mihailovik in a corridor just as a sudden sound startled her and she'd demanded in panic, "Vot ist dot?"

"Dot," he had informed with contempt she was too dim-witted to detect, "ist der vater pvumps vot pvumps der vater."

"Ah, tso?" she'd said, idiotically relieved. "Mine t'anks!"

"Tsink of it nozzings," he had snorted.

A choice pair to be snatched from the very maw of death and granted life denied to others. Creation would never have missed them. And now they'd be a handicap on the long march, an unwanted liability, whereas any two of the doomed crew would have been an asset. Destiny had a mighty poor notion of the proper way in which to arrange things.

Another survivor was Hannibal Paton, a lanky, soft-voiced Negro, former engine-room hand of the third watch. The only darkie aboard the vessel. He'd escaped while better men had been swept clean out of the scheme of things. It didn't seem right somehow.

One could feel the same way about the yellow-faced monkey known as Little Koo. A spindly, undersized creature who once had performed some kind of lowly, unskilled task in the officers' mess. A slit-eyed, toothy, apologetic specimen who spoke only when spoken to. Quiet and secretive. Nobody knew even his real name. Probably Kwok Sing, or something like that, but he'd alway been called Little Koo.

Lastly there was Sammy Finestone, youngish, swarthy, black-haired, flashily dressed, a passenger from Earth and said to be a petty trader in rare crystals. A typical Hebrew in Bill Mallet's estimation. One that had never soiled his hands with honest work. Doubtless Sammy had been first into the lifeboat when the big bang came, grabbing the safest seat and clutching his bag of diamonds with an eager, clawlike grip that would remain until death us do part.

Veritably a motley mob characteristic of those who crawl like lice over every space-going vessel bound for far and better parts. One learns to waste no time upon them, to avoid them, steer clear of them—unless compelled by disaster to consort with them cheek by jowl.

Symes was still talking. "All I know about Valmia consists of the odd bits within my memory. The total doesn't amount to much. We've no reference books, nothing else to go upon." He gazed around in half-

hearted hopefulness. "Anyone else who happens to be particularly well-informed about this planet?"

They were all glumly silent excepting Bill Mallet, who grunted, "I'd never so much as heard of the place until now."

"All right." Frowning to himself, Symes went on, "The most I remember is that it's got a rescue-station as I mentioned before. Also that the planet has never been assigned for settlement. It's marked unsuitable for human habitation."

"Do you recall the reasons?" inquired Kessler.

"Unfortunately, I don't. They're the usual ones, I suppose: unfriendly life-forms, inadequate or dangerous food resources, an atmosphere that kills either quickly or slowly, a sun that does ditto."

"You can't say whether it's just one of these features or the whole lot?"

"No, I can't," admitted Symes, lugubriously. "But one thing speaks for itself: the rescue-station is under a dome. They don't go to all the trouble and expense of creating livable conditions within a shield unless they are definitely unlivable outside of it."

"So what you're trying to tell us," said Kessler, meeting him eye to eye, "is that our time is limited?"

"Yes."

"To what? To how many days or weeks?"

"That is anyone's guess." His forehead was deeply corrugated as he strove to bring back cogent facts that he'd never expected to need. "I've a faint idea that something is wrong with the atmosphere, but I can't swear to it. When you've been stuffed with information on ten thousand planets, most of which you never expect to see, you tend to forget nine-tenths of it. A man's mind can hold only so much."

"The air tastes all right to me," commented Bill Mallet, drawing a deep breath. "Bit thick and stuffy but that's nothing to worry about."

"You can't tell by how it feels or smells," Symes told him. "What you breathe may take six months to kill you. Or less."

"Then the sooner we get out of this the better," said Sammy Finestone.

"That goes for everyone," retorted Bill Mallet, staring at him. "Not just for you!"

"He said *ve*, nod *I*," Mrs. Mihailovik chipped in.

"Tso vat?" asked Mallet, switching the stare to her direction.

"Shut up, all of you," ordered Symes, displaying irritation. "The time to squabble is when we get someplace safe. Until then we've better use for our energies." He gestured toward the lifeboat. "First, we'll bring out Murdoch and Flaherty and give them decent burial."

They went silent. Max Kessler and Hannibal Paton went into the boat, reappeared with the bodies, laid them side by side on a carpet of purple moss. When Kessler had snatched them into the airlock five seconds before the lifeboat blew free, Murdoch

and Flaherty had already been beyond resuscitation. They were cold before the rocket-tubes were properly warm. Now they lay upon the moss while the blue sun scowled down and gave their faces a horrid tinge of green.

A few emergency tools were racked in the boat and included one spade. Taking turns with this, they dug graves in red-colored soil that smelled like old iron far gone in rust. They composed the two in their last resting-places while Little Koo looked on expressionlessly and Mrs. Mihailovik snivelled into a rag that served as handkerchief.

With glossy-peaked cap held in one hand, Symes looked at the sky and said, "Flaherty was a Roman Catholic. He died without a priest. You won't hold that against him, will you, God? He had no choice about the matter."

He stopped, a little embarrassed by Mrs. Mihailovik's loud and uncontrolled sobs, but still kept his gaze fixed upon the eternal blue.

"As for Murdoch's faith, we don't know what it was. But he was a good man, the same as Flaherty. They were both fine men. Please forgive them any little sins that may be recorded against them and grant them the last haven of good sailors."

Mr. Mihailovik was comforting his wife, patting her and saying, "There, Momma—there, there!"

After a short pause, Symes finished, "Amen!" and put on his cap.

"Amen!" murmured the others.

"Amen!" lisped Little Koo with the air of one only too willing to do that which is decent and proper.

Feeny sniffed around the graves, went in turn to each of the silent watchers and emitted a querulous whine.

THE lifeboat's armament was hopelessly inadequate. Nobody could be saddled with the blame for this. The tiny vessel had been undergoing its weekly check-up at the moment of disaster, with much of its normal contents lying outside in the corridor when the *Star Queen* flew apart. Even the fuel-tanks had not received compensation for their twenty percent loss by evaporation.

Feeny and Paton had been actually in the boat. Seven more still surviving in a shapeless lump that was one-third of the *Star Queen's* tail-end had staggered to it with sealed lips, pinched noses and starting eyes. Two more had been dragged in, the two now buried. And they'd blown free with what little they'd got.

No face masks. No oxygen cylinders. No portable ray-projectors. One pocket compass and that with its face cracked. A radio that didn't work because of a defect that Thomason might have cured in two minutes had he not been among the floaters in space. Three automatic pistols, a box of ammunition, a large quantity of iron rations and a few metal implements. Half a dozen heavy, razor-edged machetes. Nothing more.

Already wearing a belt holding one

of th automatics, Symes said, "I'll stick to this weapon and take the compass. We'll march in single file with me in front." His attention shifted to Kessler. "If we walk into any serious trouble I'll be the first to catch it. I may not get out of it alive. In that event, you'd better take over the lead." He tossed an automatic across. "So you have this one and, in the meantime, keep to the end of the line and function as our rearguard."

He surveyed the others, trying to decide who should have the third weapon. Mallet needed it least, being of exceptionally powerful build and fully capable of making redoubtable use of a machete. The same applied to Paton whose black body was well-muscled. As for the Mihailoviks, chances were ten to one they wouldn't be capable of aiming it straight. Feeny couldn't use it even if he wanted to.

That left Sammy Finestone and Little Koo. The latter was much the smaller of the two: moreover as a member of the crew he must have had at least rudimentary training in the handling of firearms. He should know which way to point the thing when he pulled the trigger. So he gave it to Little Koo.

"The rest of you take those broadswords," he ordered, indicating the machetes. "Divide the rations, each taking as much as they can carry. Fill your water-bottles and we'll get started."

They did as instructed, humping their respective loads, looking with uneasy faces at the waiting jungle and reluctant to leave the ship. For most of a dreadful week the small metal cylinder had been home, a man-made sanctuary from the cosmos that so suddenly had raged against them. It seemed sheer ingratitude to abandon it now and leave it to the hungry jungle that soon would cover it and hasten its corrosion.

Sensing this feeling because he shared some of it himself, Symes told them, "If we make it to the rescue-station they'll send out a copter with a load of rocket-fuel and bring this boat back. It's too valuable to be left to rot."

That soothed them slightly. They started out, heading northward and following a yard-wide path made by nobody knew what. Symes was in the lead, automatic in hand. Next came Hannibal Paton and Feeny. Then Little Koo, the Mihailoviks, Sammy Finestone, Bill Mallet and Max Kessler.

The jungle closed around, a riot of colors in which a dark, almost black green predominated. The blue sun became shielded by overhead growths but still drove its rays through rare gaps, making brilliant shafts through massed growths as if spotlighting unimaginable things lying in wait on the concealed ground.

They covered a mile, stumbling over roots and creepers, twisting corners, occasionally hacking at ropey things straggling across the route. Some of the slashed vines writhed away like mutilated worms. The line

stopped and Symes called back.

"Watch out for this orchid-covered thing—it made a bite at me!"

Hesitantly they shuffled on. The path took a sharp turn and on the corner stood a huge growth bearing great crimson-trumpeted flowers. Mallet could see Mrs. Mihailovik edging nervously around it, as far away as she could get, her eyes wide, her steel-rimmed spectacles halfway down her nose. Her husband was urging her on though no less wary himself.

"Is got by now, Momma. Nod worry. You is got by."

"Am trouble vor you, Grigor. Make hurry!"

Grigor edged round in exactly the same way, watching the plant every moment, trying to maintain as much distance as possible without putting himself nearer some other danger behind. He made it, joined her, pushed on. Sammy Finestone approached the corner cautiously, neared it, went round it in one mad dash.

Sniffing his disdain, Bill Mallet marched brawnily up the path, his machete poised in readiness. He could now see some of the crimson trumpets straining toward the path, pulling at their stalks in eagerness to come within reach. One lay on the ground, decapitated by Paton's knife just as it stabbed at Symes. He came abreast, posed barely within reach.

A trumpet immediately lunged at him. He got a fragmentary glimpse of an enormous crimson maw armed with a thousand slender needles, then his gleaming machete struck it from its thick, elastic stem. The thing let out an eerie gasp as it fell.

Behind him, Kessler said, "I wouldn't have bothered."

"Why not? I'm using no ammo."

"You're using strength and nervous tension. You may need all you've got before you're through."

"Tell that to Sammy. Notice the way he scuttled around it? Like a frightened hare!" He laughed, chopped a piece of vine which promptly coiled and coiled again. "Sammy's only worry is Mrs. Finestone's little boy—and his sack of diamonds."

"*Has* he got a sack of diamonds?" asked Kessler in open surprise.

"Ever know of a Hebe who hadn't?"

"Sh-h-h!—he'll hear you."

"As if I care," scoffed Mallet. Speeding his pace he caught up with the subject of the conversation. Sammy was waiting on the next turn of the trail, his dark eyes anxious.

"For a moment I thought something had happened."

"Fat lot you did about it," Mallet gave back.

"I was just about to chase after you when I heard your voices."

"Did your ears burn?" asked Mallet, grinning at him.

"No." Sammy was genuinely puzzled. "Should they have done?"

"Maybe. We were enjoying the way you cornered on two wheels past that—"

From somewhere well ahead came Symes' voice. "What's the hold-up

back there?"

"Coming!" yelled Kessler.

They moved on in silence.

DEATH came at night when the sun had given way to three midget moons one of which dragged a hazy wisp behind it like a pale specter prowling in thin drapes. The stars were distorted and sickly in a sky that refused to be black and insisted on retaining slight traces of the searing globe below the horizon.

The nine had built a fire within a small clearing. Seven sat around it while two remained on their feet and kept constant watch on semi-visible surroundings. Feeny tried in vain to sleep, first resting head on paws and blinking at the flames, dozing for less than a minute then perking upright, eyes alert, ears twitching. His manifest restlessness communicated itself to the others.

A moodiness lay over them too. The general estimate of the day's progress made it somewhere between eight and ten miles. Allowing for the constant zig-zagging of the path their northward gain could not be more than five or six miles. At that rate it would take them most of an Earth-year to reach the fortieth parallel—if they lived that long.

Neither could they trust to hit squarely upon the rescue-station's location with the aid of a pocket compass and one man's memory. There might well be a considerable mileage to cover along the parallel itself, assuming that they'd know when they reached it.

If only the lifeboat had held just a little more fuel, say enough for one circumnavigation of the planet. If only the radio had still operated on landing so that it could send out its periodic S.O.S. until the rescue-station got a true bearing on it. If only Thomason or one of the junior radio-operators had been among the survivors, able to repair the apparatus and thus save them all in short time.

It was a long and miserable list of "ifs." In stories are characters who know everything about everything. In real life it isn't like that. The expert engineer knows little or nothing about space-navigation; the trained navigational officer knows little or nothing about radio. Each must do the best with what he has got. He can do no more.

But what had Hannibal Paton got other than a big, fat mouth to eat into the precious rations? What had the Mihailoviks got other than weary legs and tired feet to slow down the rest? What had Sammy got, or Little Koo? Not even a fragment of knowledge helpful in finding the way out. Nothing but the willingness to be nurse-maided into safety if it could be done.

Bill Mallet was lying on his side stewing these thoughts and futilely inviting slumber that refused to come. Lit up by flames, he could see the half-naked dancing girl tattooed on his hairy forearm. He twitched his muscles a few times to make her wiggle. Close by his outstretched fingers lay his machete, silvery and shin-

ing.

On his right two tiny red spheres lit up every now and again as Feeny opened and closed his eyes. Immediately across the fire he could see the Mihailoviks clumsily sprawled together, eyes closed, mouths open. But for the continual crackle and splutter of the fire he might have been able to hear their snores. Dumb pigs, he thought, waddling in hopes of ultimately arriving at the trough.

Kessler sneaked quietly out of the half-dark, laid more brushwood and rotten logs on the flames. Sparks flew around. He went back to keep watch in the shadows. Time crawled on while two of the moons sank low and the third dragged its veil more sluggishly across the zenith.

Something made sibilant rustling noises deep in the vegetation. A faint but pungent odor oozed out of the jungle, strengthening slightly as the almost unhearable sounds drew nearer. The smell was somewhat like that of goats sweating in a summer's day. The sounds reached from near to far away, as if the thing that caused them was immensely long.

Silence awhile except for the spitting and snapping of the fire and several uneasy whines from Feeny. Nonvisual senses reached surreptitiously out of the gloom, surveyed the clearing, studied the fire, the sleepers, the watchers. It reached a decision.

Came a fierce forward lunge, the brittle break of an impeding branch, a loud yell from Kessler and the hard crack of an automatic. Trees swayed and bushes whipped sidewise all the way from the clearing to a point three hundred yards off.

It wasn't until he was standing dazedly on his feet, machete in hand, that Mallet realised he must have succeeded in going to sleep. He could remember waking up with a violent start as somebody bawled the alarm and fired a shot. An instant later a lean black body had hurtled over him, big bush-knife in fist. Paton going into action.

He jumped the same way himself, toward the fracas in the jungle, without looking to see what anyone else was doing. The gun exploded again and again, making thin flashes of orange flame in the dark. A strange coughing noise came out of the night as of something choking.

Then like one in a nightmare Mallet became aware of Symes standing beside him holding a torch of blazing twigs. In the flickering light they could see monster coils four feet thick sliding swiftly back into the greater darkness of thicker growths. They moved with horrid sinuosity, hauling a great, eyeless head evil beyond measure. Streams of milk-white goo were flowing from deep gashes across the neck.

A few paces in front of them was Kessler, cursing vigorously and stooping over the limp, silent form of Hannibal Paton. He picked up the body, grunting under its weight, brought it back to the fireside. Symes bent over it, examined it.

"The devil grabbed me," said Kessler, getting breath. "I yelled and fired straight into its ugly head as

it lugged me away Hanny jumped the fire and everyone else, came at it like he'd gone clean crazy. He started trying to hack its head off. It dropped me, swiped him, backed out fast. I gave it two more, right in the bean, but it didn't make much difference." He mopped his forehead and fresh sweat promptly beaded out. "By now I'd have been a mile away and fifty yards down its guts if Hanny hadn't come on the way he did."

Biting his lip Symes glanced down, found Mrs. Mihailovik busily bandaging an ugly gash in Paton's right arm. Where she had found the wrapping was a mystery. It wasn't a piece out of the first-aid pack. Probably a strip torn from her under-dress. She was rocking to and fro and crooning over the black figure as she performed her self-appointed task.

Nudging her gently, Symes said in quiet, appreciative tones, "I'm terribly sorry, Ma'am, but you're wasting your time. He has a broken neck. He's dead."

She came up slowly, looking at him then at the body. The eyes behind her glasses registered incredulity until suddenly the tears welled up. She tried to stop herself but couldn't. She took off the glasses, made pathetic attempts to stem the flow while her squat body shook all over.

Taking her arm, Symes led her back to her place by the fire. Mallet stood watching them, watched until he was conscious of Kessler studying him in turn.

He said, awkwardly, "Lucky escape, eh?"

"Luck had nothing to do with it," assured Kessler. He got the spade, dug a hole beneath a fragrant tree.

They searched Hannibal Paton for the identities of his next of kin then laid him reverently to rest. Kessler cut a wooden cross and fixed it on the grave. Symes asked the sky to accept one of its own children.

Bill Mallet said, "Amen!"

Little Koo echoed it.

So did the others.

Mrs. Mihailovik wept again.

NEXT day the path wandered westward. They turned into another track that ran more to the north. It widened slightly and they made better time along it. Quietened by tragedy they kept closer together and marched in the same order as before except that Feeny had now attached himself to Symes.

The route rose considerably, the jungle remained as thick and menacing as ever but had a smaller proportion of spreading trees. Overhead gaps were wider, more frequent, letting the blue sun burn through to scald them in passing. Perspiration made their hair lank, dampened their backs. Atmosphere became stuffier than ever, seeming to thicken with altitude instead of thinning as it should have done.

Before mid-day Mrs. Mihailovik gave up. She seated herself on a fallen tree-trunk, her spectacles dimmed with moisture, her expression completely resigned.

"Mine feet."

"Vot of them, Momma?" inquired Grigor with great concern.

"Is done." Slipping her shoes off, she sighed deeply. "No more can go."

Kessler caught up from the rear and Symes came back from the front. The whole group clustered around.

"What's the matter?"

"Says her dogs have packed in," explained Mallet.

"We'll rest a bit," Symes decided, carefully concealing his worry over this delay. "Maybe we'll get along better with more frequent stops."

"Is mooch better vizoud me," remarked Mrs. Mihailovik, with the air of one making an incontrovertible point. "You go on."

"What, and leave you here by yourself?"

"Nod by herself," denied Grigor, taking a seat beside her. "I also stay."

Symes said, morbidly, "You'd be waiting for certain death."

"Togedder," topped Grigor as if that were all he asked of life.

She touched his hand, fondling it with thick fingers, and pleaded, "Stay nod for me, Grigor. Is silly. You go on."

"I stay!" He settled himself more firmly.

"We'll all stay," said Symes, brooking no argument. He glanced at his watch. "We'll see how we feel in another hour's time Meanwhile, we can have something to eat." His gaze wandered slowly over the group, settled on Bill Mallet. After a short while, he snapped, "Well, what's eating *you?* Out with it, man! Don't stand there tottering on the verge!"

Mallet fidgeted uncomfortably as several pairs of eyes studied him expectantly. "I . . . I—"

Symes said, "Look, Bill, if it's useful, let's have it. If it isn't, keep it to yourself."

More embarrassed than ever, Mallet blurted out, "Back in the old gymnasium days I was a pretty good masseur."

"What of it?"

Carefully avoiding Mrs. Mihailovik's gaze, he said in a rush, "I can do things with exhausted feet."

"Can you?" Symes' face cleared, showed relief and new hope. "By hokey, that's useful! Think you can help Mrs. Mihailovik?"

"If she'll let me try," said Mallet, his tones showing that he thought this most unlikely.

"Of course she will," Symes declared. He looked at her. "Won't you?"

"Von't you, Momma?" urged Grigor, nudging her.

"Is mooch trobble for me," she protested.

"It's more trouble to squat aimlessly around when we can be getting some place," Symes pointed out. He turned back to Mallet. "See what you can do for her, Bill."

"I want some lukewarm water for a start," said Mallet. "Guess we'll—"

Sammy Finestone chipped in. "We passed a stream three or four hundred yards back." He pawed among the packs they'd put down, found the canvas bucket. "I'll go get some."

"Not by yourself, you don't," con-

tradicted Symes, displaying sudden sharpness. "A bucket of water isn't worth a life and you can't do much for yourself with a machete. You need a gun." He switched to Kessler. "You go with him, Max, just in case."

They departed, came back in short time with a gallon of water, warmed it slightly by letting it stand awhile in the full rays of the sun. Mrs. Mihailovik soaked her swollen feet for a quarter of an hour.

After that, she dried them self-consciously, let Mallet grip a foot between his knees as if she were a horse about to be shod. Flexing his fingers he got to work, expertly thumbing ligaments and muscles. It took quite a time before he was satisfied and dealt similarly with the other one.

"Who's got the first-aid kit?"

"Me." Sammy handed it over.

Unzipping its waterproof casing, Mallet scrabbled among packets, wrappers, cans and sealed bottles, found the ether, swiftly swabbed a little of it over both feet.

"Ouch!" She sucked in a quick breath. "Is colt—like ice."

"Evaporation," he explained.

Opening a can of petroleum jelly, he took her thick-soled shoes, rubbed the stuff well in, vigorously beat the soaked leather with a smooth club of wood, rubbed more jelly, flexed and again flexed the footwear until he could easily bend toe to heel. He handed the shoes to her.

"Try 'em on now—and don't tie them tightly. Let them fit loose."

Doing as instructed, she stood up, took a few experimental steps around. Her eyes beamed with surprised delight and for the first time Mallet noticed that they were a clear, china blue, like those of a doll.

"Is *beau*-ti-ful!" she informed. More steps, taken with childish pleasure as if she'd miraculously acquired new feet. "Mine t'anks!"

"Mine also," said Grigor, vastly relieved and showing it.

"Heck," said Mallet. "It's nothing much."

Couple of days back he'd have sneered, "Tsink of it nozzings." Somehow he couldn't do that now. It didn't seem right. There was that pathetic gratitude showing in Grigor's eyes. And there were various meaningful phrases running round and round within his own mind.

"Luck had nothing to do with it. If Hanny hadn't come on the way he did—"

"A bucket of water isn't worth a life. You can't do much for yourself with a machete."

"Is mooch better vizoud me."

"I stay."

Yes, they'd been willing to stay, alone in the jungle but together, awaiting the bitter end.

Education!

DAY number four, five, six, seven. Total distance not known. Northward progress guessed-at as somewhere about fifty miles. They'd now been going for a week but it seemed like a month, more than a month. The lifeboat might as well be

on another planet. The sleeping-places of Murdoch and Flaherty and Hannibal Paton were mistily pictured mounds set in spots unreachably afar.

And with the dawn Symes urged them to an early start mercifully unaware that his own turn came next. Again he switched to a side-path which the compass determined as more suitable than the one they'd been following. Moving at fair pace they tried to cover maximum ground before the sun reached its zenith and burned them anew.

During the mid-day meal Little Koo paused in his eating, shifted from under the shade of their tree, tried to look into the unbearably brilliant sky. At the same time Feeny sat up, ears perked forward, whining.

"Anything wrong?" asked Symes, grabbing his automatic.

"Hear tiny sound high up." Coming back, Little Koo sat down and impassively got on with his meal. "Think I hear him before, day or two ago. Not sure."

"What kind of a sound?"

"*Whuyoum, whuyoum, whuyoum,*" Little Koo demonstrated.

"Eh? Do it again."

"*Whuyoum, whuyoum,*" he obliged.

"I've not noticed it," Symes said.

"Me, neither," Kessler put in. "Maybe he's got sharper ears than the rest of us."

"Plenty sharp," Little Koo indorsed.

Bill Mallet went out, stared upward through shading fingers. "Sounded to me as if he was imitating a copter."

"That's what I thought." Joining him, Symes searched as much of the sky as his eyes could endure to look at.

"Don't tell me we're developing hallucinations," said Kessler. "Why should a copter be roaming around? The station picked up no emergency signals from us. We weren't able to make any."

"Do you suppose that Thomason did manage to put out a call from the *Star Queen* before his transmitter spread itself seventeen different ways?"

"Not a chance. That rock hit without one-tenth of a second's warning."

"I don't think it was a copter," decided Symes, going back to his meal.

"Neither do I."

"Hear sound." insisted Little Koo. "Il *huyoum, whuyoum.*"

They let the subject drop. The sound did not come again. Bill Mallet gave Mrs. Mihailovik's feet another spell of treatment that by this time had become a daily ritual. Sammy was always ready with water, jelly, ether. Grigor always rewarded Mallet with his eyes. Mrs. Mihailovik's reaction never varied.

"Beau-ti-ful! Mine t'anks!"

In the late afternoon the line suddenly and unexpectedly halted at a point where surrounding growths were abnormally thick and tangled. Feeny was barking his head off. Both Symes and the dog were out of sight around a sharp bend with Little Koo halted on the corner.

"What goes, Alex?" called Kessler from the rear.

Symes' voice came back, doubtful but wary. "Feeny's acting up. Dancing around in front of me." He stopped, added in higher tones, "Lay off, you Irish idiot—you'll tear my pants apart."

"Take it easy, Alex. That pooch is no dope."

"I know. Can't make out what's exciting him."

"Nothing visible ahead?"

"Nary a thing. I can see a hundred yards to the next bend."

"We can't go back," said Kessler. "We've got to go on. You stay where you are. We'll bunch up to you and meet it in a lump—whatever it is."

"No use," Symes' voice came back. "There isn't room on the path anyway. I've got to deal with this myself."

"Maybe it's gone," suggested Kessler, hopefully. "Feeny's quiet now."

A wild flurry of agitated barks promptly contradicted him.

Symes said with some grimness, "Hear that? It was when I tried to move forward."

"Nod like," announced Mrs Mihailovik, displaying considerable apprehension. "Is better for to—"

She shut up as Symes again spoke, this time addressing Little Koo. "You keep me covered. I'm stepping out whether Feeny likes it or not."

Feeny immediately yapped with unaccustomed frenzy, ended it with a spine-tingling howl of canine woe. At the same time they heard a strange breaking sound and a short, muffled exclamation from Symes. Then all was silent except for Feeny's whimpers.

Gun in hand, Little Koo glanced back from the corner, said, "Fallen down hole."

Handing Sammy his automatic, Kessler rasped, "Stay put and keep watch behind."

He pushed past the others, Bill Mallet going with him, rounded the corner. Four or five yards farther on a yawning black hole extended the full width of the path. Feeny was wandering around it, emitting a curious mixture of moans and growls. His eyes were red-rimmed, his ruff standing up.

Dropping his machete, Bill Mallet lay down on his belly, edged carefully toward the broken rim. "Hold onto my legs, will you?"

He inched farther, reached the edge some of which crumbled under the weight of his arms. Looking down, he could see nothing but stygian darkness.

"Alex!"

No reply.

"ALEX!"

Silence.

Louder still, "Alex, are you all right?"

Nothing but a faint, indefinable clattering sound coming from a long way down. Feeling sidewise, he found a pebble, dropped it into the hole, counted ten very slowly before he heard it land. The stone's clunk was immediately followed by more clattering, scuttling noises. It made him

think of something huge and chitinous. A colossal crab.

"Maybe he knocked himself out," ventured Kessler, two yards back and clinging to Mallet's boots.

"Afraid it's worse than that."

"Dead?"

"I hope so."

Scowling his disapproval, Kessler said with much severity, "What d'you mean, you hope so?"

"This hole goes deep. It's been specially made. It's a trap. There's something monstrous waiting at the bottom."

Kessler found himself sweating heavily. "You sure of that?"

"I can hear it moving around."

"I hear him, too," confirmed Little Koo, his flat, yellow face expressionless. "Go clatty-clat."

Hauling on the boots, Kessler drew the other back. Mallet stood up, dusted himself.

"We need a very large coil of rope to get down there."

Flattening himself on the path, Kessler said, "You hold me." He crept forward, got over the gap, bawled, "Alex! Alex!"

There was no answer from the ghastly depths. Only faint noises of armored movement. Kessler came back, regained his feet, mopped his strained face. He was like a man having a bad dream.

"We can't walk away and do nothing about this."

"Tie vines, make long rope," suggested Little Koo. "I go down."

Mallet stared at him. "Why you? If anyone goes down it'll be me!"

"Much weight," said Little Koo, looking at Mallet's broad and hairy chest. "Too big."

"He's right," observed Kessler. "You're twice his bulk. If anyone goes down that hell-hole he'll have to be our lightest member."

"Me," said Little Koo, contemplating the prospect with bland equanimity.

Troubled almost to distraction, Kessler went on, "If Alex *is* dead I'm now the leader. And I'm far from sure that we ought to let him go down."

"Why not?" asked Mallet.

"We might be throwing one casualty after another. Besides, if something menacing is down at the bottom he can't be expected to face it with a knife. He'll have to take his gun. We've already lost one weapon -it's down there with Alex. If we lose another—"

"There'll be only one left," Mallet summed up for him. "The one you've lent to Sammy."

Kessler nodded miserably. "One gun and no compass. It would reduce our already small chances to nil."

"Have compass," informed Little Koo, producing the instrument in question. "Fell outside hole. I pick him up."

The sight of it soothed Kessler just sufficiently to enable him to reach a decision. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained. We'll send him down with a torch, just far enough to see what's there. After that we'll consider whether anything more effective

can be done."

In sweaty haste the three set to, hacking and dragging thin but tough lengths of vine from the jungle. It took more time than they liked because they had to select the supine variety, sorting it out from very similar-looking ones whose sliced pieces writhed away. Mr. and Mrs. Mihailovik wanted to join in but Kessler made them remain on the path guarded by Sammy. One worry at a time was sufficient.

With a loop of vine around his waist, Little Koo went over the edge, his automatic in his right hand, a tall, tight bunch of burning reeds in his left. His features revealed nothing whatsoever of his inward f elings. For all one could tell he did this sort of thing twice a day and three times Sundays.

The vine paid out slowly, emitting creaking noises and showing a threatening tendency to fray around the knots. The flickering torch sank into the gloom while Feeny prowled around the rim, occasionally growled and bared his teeth as his ultra-sharp ears detected motions of the unknown creature far beneath.

By mutual consent they ceased lowering, glanced at each other, called down, "See anything yet?"

"All dark," came Little Koo's unemotional tones, echoing hollowly. "Must drop more."

They paid out more vine, their apprehension building up with every yard that slipped over the edge.

"Quicker!" urged the voice from below. "Flame burning down. Getting near fingers."

Six or seven yards slid over. With nerve-racking suddenness an ultra-rapid volley of shots reverberated up the hole. Sixteen of them: the full magazine.

Mallet and Kessler hauled for all they were worth, Grigor and Mrs. Mihailovik grabbing the end of the vine and pulling with them Bill Mallet's muscles bulged mightily as he strove to whisk Little Koo to the surface in the shortest possible time. Pieces of vine stripped themselves by friction as they strained over the edge. Fibrous strands snapped and parted company with the main stalk. Kessler was tugging and praying breathlessly that the impromptu rope would hold, would not give way at the last moment.

All at once Little Koo popped up like a jack-in-the-box. Discarding the loop from around him, he ejected the empty magazine from his gun, clipped in a full one. It could not be said that his manner was strangely quiet because he was always quiet.

"Alex?" demanded Kessler.

"No head," said Little Koo. "Creature down there have bite him."

Looking a bit sick, Kessler asked, "You could see what was at the bottom?"

Little Koo nodded solemnly. "Big creature. Bright red all over. Many arms, like spider. Two eyes—so!" He held his hands eighteen inches apart. "Bad eyes. Look at me like I am more meat." He surveyed his automatic with favor, added, "I blow out eyes."

"You killed it?"

"No, only blow out eyes." He gestured toward the hole. "Listen!"

They did so, heard clanks, thumps and scrabblings as of something cumbersome and clumsy trying to climb up the hole and repeatedly falling back.

"What an end!" exclaimed Kessler, sad and frustrated. "What an end!"

Savagely he kicked a lump of dry and rotten wood into the hole. An idea struck him as he watched it plunge down.

"We can offer the dead nothing but vengeance."

"Have given that," said Little Koo with mild satisfaction. "Blow out eyes."

"It isn't enough. Blind or not, it can still squat there and feed on Alex. We must kill it."

"How?"

"We'll dump some reeds, then a lighted torch and a pile of brushwood. Turn the place into a furnace."

"What if it's got another way out, an emergency escape route?" inquired Bill Mallet.

"I hadn't thought of that," Kessler admitted. "We'll have to chance it."

"There's a better way," said Mallet. He pointed to a big boulder half hidden under a mass of growths. "If we can shift that we can flatten the red devil before it has time to get out from under."

Working with furious energy they cut away the twining obstructions, got behind the rock, braced themselves and heaved in unison. The rock shuddered, tilted, rolled over. A dozen fat and bright yellow grubs squirmed in the bare earth where it had stood.

Another simultaneous thrust and the boulder rolled to within a foot of the gap. They listened to make sure the quarry was still there. It could still be heard scratching and fumbling The rock went over. It seemed to take a surprising time to go down but in the end they heard it wallop with a harsh, splintering sound coinciding with a squashy splatter.

Kessler ceremoniously brushed his hands as if to say, "That is that!" He glanced at the compass, went round the corner to summon the others. Mallet and Little Koo heard him asking sharply, "What's she crying for now?"

"Symes," came back Sammy's voice. "It takes a woman to weep for men!"

THEREAFTER Kessler took the lead with Feeny at his side ready to give warning that next time would be heeded. Little Koo followed, then Mr. and Mrs. Mihailovik, then Sammy Finestone. Bill Mallet functioned as rearguard.

Toward evening on the tenth day Mrs. Mihailovik collapsed. She did it without sound or warning, one moment stumping along the trail with her usual thickset, heavy gait, the next moment lying in the path like a discarded bundle of rags.

Grigor's agonized call of, "Momma!" brought the line to a halt.

They grouped around her, bore her

into a little clearing, tore open the first-aid kit. Her eyes were closed, her broad, peasant face had a faint purple tinge. There was no evidence that she was breathing. Kessler grasped her wrist, was unable to detect her pulse. They stared at each other in silent impotence. Not a doctor among the lot.

Someone draped over her forehead a rag soaked in cold water. Another held a vial under her nose. Another patted her cheeks, rubbed her thick, toilworn hands. They tried in vain to summon her back to the weary world she'd so abruptly left, but it was beyond their power.

Finally Kessler took off his cap, said to the pale, dumb Grigor, "I'm sorry! I'm terribly sorry!"

"Momma!" murmured Grigor in heart-rending tones. "Oh, mine poor, tired—" He switched to a guttural language the others could not understand, fell on his knees, put his arms around her shoulders, clasped her tightly. Her spectacles lay to one side, trampled on, broken, ignored while he hugged her to him as though he'd never, never let her go. "Mine little Gerda! Oh, mine—"

The others moved off a little way, faced the jungle with ready weapons while Grigor bade a broken farewell to half his life, half his soul, half his very being. Then very gently they drew him away and buried her under a shaft of blue sun and gave her a lonely cross to gleam amid the alien tangle.

Two hours later and seven miles farther on they made camp for the night. By that time Grigor had not uttered a word. He'd marched along the trail like an automaton, neither knowing nor caring where he was going or if he ever got there.

In the bright, comforting glow of the fire, Sammy Finestone leaned over, said to him, "Don't take it so hard—she wouldn't like it."

Grigor said nothing, merely stared fixedly into the flames with eyes that failed to see a single gleam.

"She went quickly and peacefully, in the best way of all," soothed Sammy. "It was her heart, wasn't it?" Getting no response, he continued, "Several times while following close behind I noticed her go short of breath and hold her side She seemed to have difficulty in getting along. I thought maybe she'd developed a knot in her innards. But it was her heart. She must have been in pain. Why didn't she *say?*"

"Nod like to make trobble," said Grigor, dully. These were the first words he'd voiced.

They were also the last.

He never spoke again.

At four o'clock in the morning he was gone. Two moons rode high, with the third far down, when Kessler became bored with doing his spell of watch from one point, quietly circled the camp, found Grigor's sleeping-place deserted. He did not sound an immediate alarm. Rest and sleep were too badly needed to disturb them without second thoughts. So he stepped cautiously over slumbering forms, searched the camp, the near surroundings.

No Grigor.

The jungle brooded threateningly all around. Something winged and phosphorescent flitted through the tree-tops, a tiny and silent ghost. Kessler considered the position. How and when Grigor had sneaked out there were no means of telling. The fellow might be miles away by now—if still alive

But *where* he had gone was an easy guess. What to do about it? If he, Kessler, took off in immediate pursuit he'd first have to waken someone to relieve him as guard. And for a time the small party would be split into two groups, doubling their chances of being attacked by any thing or things that may have been watching and biding such an opportunity these last eleven days, also reducing their ability to resist. In this sorry fix unity was strength. Disunity meant eventual disaster.

With great reluctance he was forced to solve the problem in the only possible way: by waking the lot.

"Grigor's gone back."

"When?"

"I don't know. Either he crawled out in complete silence or maybe he'd already gone when I took over the watch and I failed to notice it." He gloomed into the fire, added, "We can't leave him to himself in this menacing maze."

"I'll go fetch him," volunteered Sammy, picking up his machete.

"Neither can we send somebody for him," Kessler went on, waving Sammy down. "We stick together regardless of whether we go forward or backward."

Bill Mallet came to his feet, heaved his heavy pack onto his back, yawned widely, hefted his big knife.

"That settles it, then. We all go back. It's only about seven miles. What's seven miles?" He yawned again, answered the question for them. "At this time of night it's more like seventy. So what? Come on!"

Shouldering their possessions they set off, guns and machetes held ready. The glow of the fire died away behind them. The moons sent down just sufficient light to make the path a vaguely mottled streak through the greenery. Feeny trotted at the head, sniffing suspiciously every now and again, growling low in his belly at intervals.

Grigor was lying in the clearing, on his side, body curled, legs drawn up, a bottle from the first-aid kit half-empty in his left hand. His right arm was sprawling protectively across the fresh mound. The wooden cross posed close by his head.

They put him down in the dark alongside mine little Gerda. Where he wanted to be. The goal toward which he had crept through miles of peril in the deep of the night.

He'd thought it over, had Grigor, during those few hours away from her. And he'd made up his mind. He was not leaving her. Always they had taken it for granted that they'd be together, come what may, right to the very last.

When you are old and gray and
full of sleep
And dreaming in a half-forgotten

land,
When none know why you sometimes sit and weep—
I'll still be there to hold your gentle hand.

KESSLER made a note in his diary. "Day number thirteen. I estimate we've northed something over one hundred miles. We've been moving faster the last couple of days."

He did not mention why they had been speedier. Everyone knew there were two reasons. Firstly they'd dropped the slow-movers. Secondly at the rate they'd been going the supplies would not last out in spite of the fact that they'd taken over the rations of the dead. A hundred-odd miles in thirteen days. It wasn't enough. Did this accursed jungle never end?

Breaking a pack of concentrated food, Kessler gave it to Feeny, opened another for himself, ate slowly. "One consolation—if you can call it that—is that the load goes down a fraction every time we have a meal."

"There are plenty of roots and fruits around," remarked Bill Mallet. "I know rule number one: eat nothing not definitely known to be edible. The penalty for disregarding it can be more than awful. But sooner or later we'll have to chance it."

"Not eat—die slowly," Little Koo pointed out. "Eat wrong thing—die quickly."

"And, mister, you can be really *glad* to die quickly," Mallet topped. "On other planets some of the most luscious-looking fruits I've seen can make you peg out with your toes tucked tightly into your armpits."

"Well, you'd need a shorter grave in that attitude," observed Sammy Finestone. "It would save about half the labor."

Mallet eyed him carefully. "A fortnight ago I'd have laid bets against any humor from you, ghoulish or otherwise."

"Why?"

"I'd have willingly bet that by this time you'd be either dead or a nervous wreck."

"I am a nervous wreck," said Sammy. "I spend all my time determinedly ignoring the fact."

"That's the boy!" approved Mallet, inwardly amazed to find himself warming toward him. "Keep going the same way and you'll get through."

Pulling irritatedly at the long beard he'd acquired, Kessler said seriously to Sammy, "Don't think you're alone in having to drive yourself along. We're all the same." He felt for, found and scratched a pair of canine ears. "Except Feeny, perhaps."

Hearing his name mentioned, Feeny agitated the stump he used for a tail.

Sammy said, "It beats me how he manages to detect traps like the one Symes fell into. He's warned us of four during these last couple of days. But for him we'd each be down a shaft feeding a crimson thingumbob."

Kessler rubbed the ears, stroked the furry back, made no comment. But he was thinking. By this time

the original party had been cut in half. They'd lost four of their members. Each one of the casualties had been a real, genuine loss deeply felt by those who remained.

If by any chance Feeny was doomed to go it would be decidedly serious. Feeny was only a medium-sized pooch but nevertheless a person and a necessary one. Without him they'd have to cut long sticks and probe the path every step of the tortuous way, slowing themselves down to a third of their former pace. Feeny was wanted. Everyone was wanted, those who had gone and those still here.

He stood up knowing that it was futile to pile tomorrow's problems on top of yesterday's woes. What was to be would be—and they'd have to face it.

"Let's get going."

They moved off Kessler and Feeny in front, Mallet at the rear. Though neither knew it, the first and last man had been pondering along similar lines. Similar but not the same because Mallet was still busy with mental readjustments.

As rearguard Mallet could see the others as often as twists and turns in the path permitted. He was therefore deeply aware of how many were in view. The distance from front to back had been longer when first they'd started this dreadful pilgrimage. Longer because others had marched between. Symes, for instance. A good guy. A first-class spaceman. Did he feel their lack of numbers solely because of Symes?

No!

He also missed a darkie.

And a pair of foreign dumbclucks.

If destiny struck again he was just as surely going to miss a Hebe.

And a little Chink.

And a prick-eared hairy mutt.

He was going to miss the rabble!

"Don't you forget all this, Mallet," he growled to himself. "If you live, never forget it!"

Sammy glanced backward over a shoulder. "Say something?"

"I am metaphorically kicking my own pants," Mallet informed.

"It's more than I can do," said Sammy.

"How's that?"

"I've already worn them out the same way."

This confession filed itself in Mallet's mind along with all recently acquired data. Other people found good cause to punish their own behinds, just like he did. Other folk made crass mistakes and later had the grace to regret them.

Surprising how much everyone has in common!

The proper thing is to live in tolerance and die with dignity.

He was learning to do the first.

It remained to be seen whether he could manage the second.

THE path went over a bare-topped hill and for the first time since starting out they had a clear view for miles around. In every direction it was the same, a solid, unbroken mass of vegetation except to the east where a range of mountains rose

black and stark against the burning sky.

Dabbing a rag over his streaming face, Kessler griped, "When down in the forest I wished myself to heck out of it. Now I am out I want back. It provided some shade if nothing else."

"Noise," announced Little Koo, pointing. "Over there. *Whuyoum, whuyoum.*"

"I don't hear it." Shading his eyes, Kessler stared in the direction indicated. "Don't see anything, either." He glanced at the others. "Do you?"

"Not a thing," Sammy admitted.

"Thought I saw a black speck going over that range," informed Mallet, doubtfully. "But I'm not sure. It might be just my imagination."

"Is it there still?"

"No. It seemed to float over and drop from sight."

"I refuse to get excited about it," declared Kessler, mopping his features again. "Another hour under this infernal sun and we'll breed delusions considerably wackier." He moved onward. "Me for the trees without delay."

Feeny barked and bristled at a nearby rock. Kessler slowed, edged toward it, gun in hand. Stiff-legged and alert, Feeny went round the other side of it. A thing like a ten-limbed lizard promptly bolted with long undulating motions, vanished over the rise. Feeny came back rumbling his disappointment.

"Eight feet long and half of it teeth." Kessler sniffed his contempt. "And it beats it at a dog's bark."

"Maybe it's allergic to harsh noises," suggested Sammy. "If Feeny had kept quiet it might have swallowed him at a gulp."

"That's something I dislike about this world—its eerie silence," informed Kessler. "Back on Earth there'd be continual pandemonium in a jungle like this. Monkeys chattering, parrots screaming and all that. Here, nobody says anything that will give him away. Big snaky things slide around without a sound. Gigantic red spiders wait down holes and make no noise. When on watch night-times I've either seen or sensed things that sneaked by without the crack of a twig. It isn't natural. It gets me down."

"Let's sing then," offered Sammy. "It'll keep our spirits up and scare off everything else."

"Sing what?" invited Kessler, liking the notion.

Sammy thought it over. "How about *There's A Long, Long Trail A-Winding?*"

They bawled it as they marched onward, all except Little Koo who didn't know a word of it. They turned to *Roll Me Over In The Clover* and the *Song of the Legionnaires* and half a dozen more. It speeded their pace down into and through the trees. Mallet gave a solo in a hoarse, unmusical bass, an Australian backwoods ditty called *Clancy's Gone A-Droving Up The Cooper.*

Finishing it, he picked on Little Koo. "We've not heard a squeak out of you. How about giving us one of your own?"

Little Koo looked sheepish.

"Come on," urged Mallet. "You can't be any worse than me."

Self-consciously and with great reluctance Little Koo obliged, producing an excruciating and unmelodious series of shrill, wailing half-tones that made them think of a cat being violently sick.

"What's all that about?" asked Mallet when the agony broke off apparently in the middle of a bar.

"The petals drift down like snowflakes and gently light upon the pale arm of my loved one," explained Little Koo with sudden and surprising fluency.

"Humph!" Mallet rubbed one side of his nose. "Very pretty!"

Fancy Little Koo having someone about whom to sing! The thought had not occurred to him before. He tried to picture her in his mind. Probably she was yellow-faced, almond-eyed, plump, jolly, a good cook and the mother of seven fat kids. Probably she was twice the size of Little Koo, bossed him and his household with a firm, efficient hand and had a name like Sublime Fragrance.

"Very pretty!" he repeated to Little Koo's inward gratification.

"How about *Finnigan's Wake?*" suggested Sammy, willing to bellow anew.

"I'm out of breath." Kessler hacked viciously at a waist-high sprawl of vines across the path. "The one in front gets all the work."

"And takes most of the risks," added Sammy, pointedly. "Don't you think we should have turns at being in the lead?"

"It's an idea." Kessler stepped through while the raw ends of sliced growths writhed backward. "I'll consider it. Remind me of it in a couple of months' time."

There was no need to do so.

He didn't last that long.

THREE days later they encountered the path-makers. What had created the jungle trails had puzzled them more than once. It wasn't the huge, snaky things like the one Hannibal Paton had tried to carve. They'd caught glimpses of a dozen of those to date but no more had attacked and none had shown themselves upon the path.

The smaller lizardlike creatures weren't responsible, either; they were too few in numbers, too light in bulk. It had been apparent from the start that the tortuous trails must have been made by rare but very weighty users. Parts of it were overgrown, being slowly reclaimed by the jungle, but the portions still bare—except where crimson trappers lurked—were firm and solid as if pounded down by monstrous feet.

About to round a bend, Kessler stopped as a distant rumble reached his ears. The others heard it simultaneously, halted close behind. Feeny twitched his ears, displayed great uneasiness.

The sound came strangely in a world of such deathly silence. It suggested the sudden abolition of a natural law. Noise! Low-pitched and heavy, with a sort of earth-shaking quality about it, like that made by

fifty thousand buffalo on the rampage. A dull but intense and gradually nearing thunder as of things beating tremendously upon the ground.

Feeny yelped, ran round in circles, and Kessler said, "I've a feeling we'd better get off this path." He examined the jungle. The noise grew louder. "There!" Indicating a part of the surrounding maze that looked not quite as thick and tangled as the rest, he started to cut his way through.

The rest chopped and sliced with him, got thirty yards off the trail when the sound roared round the corner. Mallet snatched up Feeny, held a hairy, sweat-covered hand over his muzzle to keep him quiet. Their shirts were sticking to their backs as they stood in the alien hell and watched.

Sixty or seventy immense creatures charged one behind the other along the path in the manner of runaway locomotives. They had thick, dark-gray hides, three-horned heads of appalling ugliness and small, piggish eyes. Their weight seemed to be completely out of proportion to their great size: they appeared to have fifty-tons mass for twenty-tons bulk. Each one's four pairs of elephantlike feet stamped vines and all other obstacles deep into the earth, remaking the route for a month to come.

One could feel the reverberation of their passing even from thirty yards away. The thudding of it ran up the tree-trunks and made top branches quiver. Watching them go by, making no noise other than the beat of feet and snuffle of nostrils, Kessler thought of gigantic rhinoceroses armed with triple horns.

The things went past at an ungainly, irresistible gallop and were gone, flattening everything in their way, smashing down the camouflaged doors of spiderlike entities which, when the danger had passed, would have to clamber up their holes and make another false surface with earth and spittle.

Emerging from their hiding-place, the waiters in the green gloom listened carefully for indications of a second onrush from the north, but nothing was to be heard other than the cumbersome dum-dumming of those just gone.

Staring at his big automatic, Kessler commented ruefully, "Fat lot of use this would have been. Nothing less than a seventy-five millimeter bazooka could have made one of those pause in its pace."

"What were they?" inquired Mallet, dumping Feeny on the path

"Haven't the vaguest notion. Alex was the only one who knew anything about this planet and what he could remember wasn't much." Following the bend, he came to a two-way split, consulted the compass, pointed to the left. "That one."

It brought them to a river. The path led straight to the bank at a point well-trampled for fifty yards upstream and downstream. A drinking-place for the three-horned monsters.

The waters were cloudy, yellow and fast running, making a barrier thirty yards wide and of unknown depth. The opposite bank was dead north according to the compass.

Frowning at the swift current, Kessler opined, "I would not care to try swim that. It may be going considerably faster under the surface." He mopped perspiration, surveyed without enthusiasm the greenish glitters produced by blue sunlight on yellow water. The river smelled of rotten apples and something else pungent but not identifiable. "It's too risky."

"The alternative is to go back to that fork and continue along the other branch," said Mallet. "It was running westward but maybe it'll turn north again later on."

"I'd rather not do that if it can be avoided." Kessler's eyes searched both banks and the trees. "A captive log floated over at the end of a vine might get us across."

"If we can find a suitable log in less than a week," countered Mallet, waving his hand to indicate the complete lack of anything in view.

"Just so." He thought a bit. "In the jungles of Earth the natives build rope bridges and throw them up quickly. Does anyone know how to make a rope bridge?"

Nobody knew, but Mallet ventured, "I imagine they have people both sides the river for that job. So we've got to get across to build a bridge to get ourselves across."

Little Koo said, "Swing over—like monkey."

"You must be telepathic," declared Kessler. "I was stewing that very notion." He had another look at the trees. "If we can find a suitable rope—"

They sought along the bank as far as they could go and discovered what they wanted. Of the numerous trees that arched partway across the river there was one with half a dozen big vines dangling almost to water level.

Bringing one of them in wasn't too difficult. They cut a long, thin liana out of the jungle, tied an oval stone to its end, whirled it like a bolas and got it wound round their objective at the tenth try. They hauled it in. Because of its arc as it came to the bank its end rose out of hand-reach and Mallet had to climb a small nearby tree to secure it.

"I'll go first." Kessler transferred the stone to the dangling vine, swung it across, pulled it back with the liana. It swept a mere two feet across the top of the opposite and higher bank. Satisfied, he tightened the straps of his pack, made sure that his weapon and ammunition were secure, handed the compass to Mallet. "If I get over all right, swing this across to me by itself it's too precious to risk."

Unconscious of being grimly prophetic, he allowed them to boost him into the tree. Taking hold of the vine he pulled it with all his strength, testing its toughness.

"The stone got a hefty shove," remarked Sammy, showing anxiety. "That's more than you'll have. What

if you don't quite reach the other side?"

"I will." Kessler pointed upward. "This vine's suspended at least five feet off-center toward the other bank and the level over there is quite a bit higher. I'll make it easily." He took a fresh grip on it, braced himself.

He shoved off with both feet, swooped outward. The vine creaked in protest, did not break, but did tear away from its hold upon the overhead branch. It dropped him in mid-stream and at once there shot toward him a long and violent eddy as of something moving swiftly under water.

Standing nearest the river's verge, Sammy Finestone let out a yelp as Kessler hit with a shower of cloudy yellow spray and the curious eddy appeared. Flinging off his pack, he raised hands above his head.

"Lay off, you fool!" shouted Mallet, racing from his place by the tree with the intention of grabbing the other. "You don't know what's—"

He was too late. Sammy dived in.

There was a mad swirl in mid-river. Kessler's head bobbed up, went down. The water around him heaved itself, churned, became tinged with pink.

Sammy reappeared, flung backward by the sheer violence of the subsurface disturbance. Came another great agitation accompanied by a small waterspout. An arm came momentarily into view, protruding from the foam in a last dreadful and bloody gesture before Kessler vanished for ever. Sammy, still near the bank, gave a sudden gasp.

Racing downstream to keep pace with him, Mallet sprang waist-deep into the water, grabbed Sammy by the hair, drew him into the bank. Bending, he got him under the arms, lugged him clear of the river.

Or part of him, all but the lower legs. There was nothing below his knees, nothing but pulses of blood from severed vessels

"Oh, God!" he breathed, feeling sick in the pit of his stomach.

Gently lowering the other, he got the first-aid kit, ripped it open, scanned its contents with a sense of terrible helplessness. It held no surgical instruments and he wouldn't have known how to use them had there been any. There was a hypodermic syringe and needle. Also phials of drugs, liquid and solid. How does one fill and use a syringe? Which drug should best be employed? Exactly where should one inject?

Sammy stirred, tried to sit up, white-faced and dreamy like one who doesn't yet know what has happened.

"Maxie?" he whispered. "Is he ?"

"Him gone," informed Little Koo, studying him slit-eyed. "You lie still."

"Me? Why?" He strained further, seeking command of his nether limbs, looked down.

Mallet returned and Little Koo said, "Him faint."

"Just as well. This stuff out of the kit is about the best we can do for

him. Quick, raise his right stump!"

Working swiftly, he swabbed the raw end with medicinal sealing-plastic. The stuff was tacky and difficult to apply, for it set glass-hard within a couple of seconds of daubing it on. The first layer congealed the blood and closed the vessels. More layers hardened over it, one upon another, building up until the great wound was encased in a sterile and solid mould. Then the same with the other stump.

As a swift technique for coping with grave emergencies it was top-notch—but no ultimate solution. It was good enough to hold a patient together until he could reach more competent hands and up-to-date surgical facilities. Mallet reached for soft pads and bandages, not that they were needed for the wounds, but because they might provide some cushioning and comfort. His hand stayed outstretched as Little Koo whipped out his automatic—their only remaining weapon—and spoke calmly.

"Water devil!"

Glancing backward over his shoulder, Mallet saw a great, flat, heart-shaped head sticking out of the river. It was the size of a small boat and had two white saucerlike eyes that stared at them cold and unblinking. Thin strings of weed dangled from horny projections on the outlandish face. Its jaws were still munching as though savoring a delicacy to the last.

The automatic spat savagely again and again. One of the saucer eyes blotted out and a green liquid poured from where it had been. The head ducked under water and the river went wild as the thing thrashed around on the bed.

Brought round by the hard cracks of the gun, Sammy stirred, looked up. "My legs! It took my legs!" In childish wonderment, he added, "I didn't even feel it. Just like a slight stab of pain, hardly noticeable—but it took my legs!"

"You'll be all right." Mallet got on with the bandaging.

"No I won't. Not in this place." He paused, gave a brief shiver as if sensing a queer coldness in all this heat. "Better leave me."

Mallet harshed at him, "Look, the fact that you're temporarily indisposed doesn't give you the right to talk a lot of nonsense. So shut up!"

Giving him a thin smile, Sammy said, "You can't fool me, talking that way. I know I'm next for the spade."

"We're going to carry you," Mallet retorted. "It'll be quite a change. I'm fed up digging holes. Get it out of your thick head that you can wangle me into digging another."

NOW taking charge, Mallet decided that the river must be regarded as an impassable barrier at this particular point. Had there been only the two of them—Little Koo and himself—he'd have risked a swing on one of the other vines or on three or four if a bunch could be found anchored sufficiently near together.

But with Feeny to swing and Sammy to handle, the job became too awkward. It was easier to turn back

to the westward path and seek some other more favorable branch running north. This meant adding unknown mileage to the seemingly endless journey ahead. Nevertheless it had to be faced. Obstacles that cannot be surmounted must be detoured.

They trimmed a pair of straight, tough branches and Little Koo shaped between them a flexible mattress of woven reeds. The deftness with which his long, thin yellow fingers worked was a revelation to the onlooking Mallet. It was obvious that Little Koo had an aptitude for this kind of work, for the job was done with speed and dexterity he could never hope to match.

Sammy rode on this impromptu but effective litter, protesting for the first half-hour then giving up as no notice was taken. His machete lay at his side. There was remote chance of his making use of it in any circumstances, but they were reluctant to abandon the weapon. Besides, its mere presence had good psychological effect on the man being carried: it implied the others' belief that he was still a valuable part of their armed strength. Nobody knew better than he how little justified was such a notion. A man with half-legs is like a fly without wings unless and until he can be fitted with mechanical appendages not available on alien worlds.

But the shining blade reposed there by his side, winking and blinking under rare shafts of blue sunlight and seeming to say to him, "You're all right, Sammy boy. I'd be wasting my time lying here if you were no good. I am the fighting extension of a strong right arm, and you've got arms, haven't you, Sammy boy?"

So he lay in the litter and caught the continually reassuring gleams from the blade and watched branches drift overhead and bit his bottom lip in silent pain and tried to ignore the fierce burning in his severed limbs. He was losing no blood: the sealing plastic ensured that much. Neither could germs penetrate it to get at his raw flesh. The bacteria swarming in the yellow river were a different proposition. They'd got at him early, while he was still open, they were not shut in behind the plastic and the battle was between them and his white corpuscles.

The burning was hip-high by the middle of the second night. Unable to sleep because of it, Sammy lay between the fire and the recumbent form of Little Koo. Nearby, patrolling slowly round and round was Bill Mallet doing his spell of watch. Feeny was whining in his dreams atop their pile of packs. Sammy sighed, forcing himself up to sitting position. Reflections of the flames flickered in his dark eyes. Mallet came across, knelt beside him, whispered so as not to disturb Little Koo.

"How're you doing?"

"Not so good. I—"

"Wait a sec." Mallet went to his pack, edged it from under Feeny, foraged inside, came back. "I nipped these out of the boat. Thought I'd save them for the glorious moment when the dome came in sight." He

exhibited a small can of cigarettes. "Reckon we won't need this many now."

"Keep them," breathed Sammy. He tried to suppress a gasp but failed. "Shame to bust the can open just now. They won't keep for months once the air gets at them."

"Little Koo doesn't smoke. There's only you and me." Mallet broke the vacuum, flipped the lid up. He gave Sammy a cigarette, lit it for him, had one himself. "Could you do with a shot of morphine?"

"Know how?"

"No."

Propping on one hand, Sammy leaned awkwardly toward him. He spoke in still lower tones. "You two have lugged me a couple of days. How far have you gone?"

"About seven miles," Mallet hazarded

"Three and a half miles per day. Not much, is it? Every time you meet a tangle you have to put me down while you chop a way through it. You've only got two hands, not six. You haven't got indestructible legs, either. You can't go on this way for ever."

"What of it?" Mallet eyed him in the light of the flames.

"Little Koo has got a gun."

"What of it?" repeated Mallet without slightest change of expression.

"You know!"

Mallet squirted a thin stream of smoke, watched it disperse. "I look a bum. Maybe you think I am a bum. And maybe you're right. But I'm not a murderer."

"Don't look at it in that manner," pleaded Sammy. He winced again. There were shining beads on his forehead. "You know I'll go sooner or later. I'm asking you to make it easy for me. I'd much rather—"

"You really mean you want us to make it easy for ourselves," interrupted Mallet. He spat in the fire which promptly hissed back at him. "For two pins I'd knock your stupid block off!"

Leaning back on one elbow, Sammy grinned weakly. "One thing you excel at, Bill, is comforting a fellow's ego in a menacing way."

"I'll go get that morphine."

Tramping to the other side of the fire, he pawed among the supplies. Bill, he thought. First time Sammy had called him by his first name. It might have been the same with the others if they'd stayed this long.

Paton, for instance. Maybe by now they'd have grown out of, "Here, pick this up, Paton," and, "Yes, Mr. Mallet." Maybe they'd be talking kind of different with, "Catch this, Hanny," and, "Okay, Bill."

Maybe Mrs. Mihailovik would be calling him 'Beel' and he'd be addressing her as Gerda or perhaps Mom. Once upon a time the notion would have embarrassed him beyond measure. More than that: it would have irked him into unconcealed sourness. But not now, not now. Times change. People change with them.

A cockeyed rhythm was running through his mind, repeating itself

again and again, jeering at him, mocking him as he fiddled with the morphine.

Sammy is a Sheeny,
Sammy is a Yid,
But Sammy is like Feeny—
Far better than this *kid!*

He resented it while at the same time feeling that it was true. Sammy had dived after Kessler without a moment's thought or hesitation and now he was asking them to use the gun to remove the burden thus placed upon them. Paton had dashed in where angels fear to tread, his only idea being that of diverting peril from others. Gerda and Grigor had been willing to die alone rather than handicap the rest. Even Feeny would take on one of those fifty-ton gallopers in effort to save them from being trampled underfoot.

And what had *he* got? A dancing-girl tattooed on his forearm and a spray of shooting stars across his back. A wad of hair on his chest. A bull-body and the constitution to plough doggedly ahead until he dropped.

All the rest was ignorance. His superb knowledge of reactive-engineering was now so much useless lumber. He knew too little about surgery and the use of drugs. He lacked Feeny's sharp ears and supersensitive nose. He hadn't got Little Koo's agile fingers and bland acceptance of the future. He couldn't even swim, like Sammy. He wasn't much darned good at anything.

Except comforting folk in a menacing way. Yes, that was a mite in his favor, a very small chalk-mark to put against his name.

Like most persons deeply exercised about their own misapprehensions, he was going to absurd lengths to underrate himself. It was the swing of the psychic pendulum which dives to the opposite extreme before it begins to settle down in moderation. There was reason for it. Deep down inside him—or was it outside and far away? —somewhere a voice was calling.

He came back, holding the needle. "I'm taking it for granted that one filling represents one maximum dose, and I hope I'm right. Want to chance it?"

"Yes." Sammy's face twisted in pain. He dropped his half-smoked cigarette. "Anything, anything to make this more bearable."

"I think the thighs would be best. They're nearer the source of the trouble. Like to try a half-shot in each one?"

Sammy agreed. Kneeling beside him, Mallet administered the stuff. He'd never felt more shaky in his life, but his broad, hairy fingers were made firm and gentle by sheer willpower.

He stood up. "Feel better?"

"Not yet. Probably it takes a minute or two." He lay back, sweating. After what seemed an age, he said, "It's going off. It's easing a lot." He closed his eyes. "Thanks, Bill!"

Light from the second moon angled through a tree-gap, illuminated his face in damp paleness. Mallet waited a while, bent over him, listened to his breathing. Satisfied that he was

asleep, he resumed his lonely vigil.

In the mid-morning as they were mounting a slight rise, Mallet felt a pull on the litter, looked back. Little Koo had stopped and was lowering his end of the shafts. Mallet put his down likewise.

"What's the matter?"

"Not look. Not move. Nearly roll off. Think him dead," said Little Koo doubtfully.

Feeny went to the body, sniffed, let go a thin, reedy howl. Mallet had a look, feeling Sammy's wrist, listening to his chest. He reached for the spade.

When he had finished by patting shape and firmness into the little mound he became aware of Little Koo standing near holding a newly-cut cross and making ready to echo the inevitable, "Amen!"

"I don't know that he wants that," said Mallet.

"Not want?" Little Koo stared aghast at his own workmanship, his air that of one of in his appalling ignorance has committed an unknown enormity.

"I'm not sure. Maybe he would, maybe he wouldn't—but somehow I don't think so."

"Him not say?" inquired Little Koo.

"Shut up—let me think a minute"

Mallet tormented his mind in effort to make it produce hazy fragments of memory, one of those worthless oddities of information one picks up from time to time and never expects to use. Why is it that people know so little about people?

Finally he said, "I fancy I've got it. If I'm wrong, he'll forgive me."

Ramming the cross into the opposite side of the path, he cut and trimmed half a dozen branches, fastened them into two triangles, fixed them together, mounted the assembly on the grave. Then he looked at the sky.

"I don't know what to say."

"Good feller," suggested Little Koo, fearful of another blunder.

"Yes, that'll do," said Mallet. "One can't say more."

Picking up their packs and weapons, they moved onward, leaving the Star of David to stand amid the trees.

Two men and a dog.

DAY number thirty-two, or was it thirty-six or fifty-six? Nobody knew, nobody cared. They had lost count, there being no point in keeping it. About the only crumb of comfort was that they'd crossed the river where it was narrow and had big rocks that served as stepping-stones. They were northing once more.

Mileage was anyone's guess. Perhaps three hundred, perhaps four hundred. At very most a mere quarter of the way to the dome assuming that Symes' estimate had been correct. They had several times the distance still to go.

A man, a Chink and a mutt.

Eh?

Three men!

Three men named Mallet, Little Koo and Feeny. One was built like a pug. One was small, with almond

eyes. One had four legs and could not speak. But what of it? There were three men on the march to death or salvation, three men and a spade.

They had finished their noon meal and by accident Mallet picked up Little Koo's pack. The packs looked pretty much the same but he knew it wasn't his own the moment he lifted it. Putting it down without remark, he took his own, heaved its straps over his shoulders, grasped his machete.

From that moment on he kept surreptitious watch upon Little Koo. It didn't take him long to discover what the other was up to. The technique was cunning. He would have noticed it long before had there been any reason for suspicion.

At meal-times they took turns breaking a food-pack for Feeny. Little Koo was straightforward about this matter, but not when he came to break another one for himself. He had an open one which he'd produce, go through the motions of unfastening and then pretend to eat. No empty container was thrown away. The flat box went back still full, in readiness for the next play. Since his pack felt twenty percent heavier than Mallet's, he must have been doing this at least the last four days.

Yet Little Koo was not starving. He was eating by night during his spells on watch. Keeping one eye open by the fire, Mallet saw him gorging himself on the fruits of the jungle, consuming strange roots and queer nuts, filling himself in readiness for the next day. The motive was obvious and Mallet objected to it. He raised the matter immediately he discovered the facts.

"Not enough food, eh? It'll give out before we're halfway to the dome, won't it?"

"Not know."

"You know, all right! Don't give me that! You've worked it out in your mind. You've decided we'll never make it unless we can live on the jungle. Somebody's got to be the guinea-pig for that and it might as well be you."

"Not understand," protested Little Koo, his black eyes inscrutable.

"Bunkum!" Mallet studied the other as if he'd found him guilty of a major crime. "Unknown foods are dangerous. There's no telling what they can do to a man. So you argue that if you get away with this there'll be proof that we're safe. If you don't, and it kills you"—he tapped his pack —"there'll be so much the more chow for Feeny and me."

"Not care, if dead," said Little Koo, thwarting him with true Oriental logic.

"*I* care!" shouted Mallet. "I can't talk to your pack after you're gone. I can't use it for company. Neither can it take your turn at night-watch. Who's going to stand on guard while the other sleeps?"

"Nice dog," suggested Little Koo, pointing at Feeny.

"He's not enough." He prodded the other in the chest, his manner tough, authoritative. Completely unaware of the imbecility of what he

was saying, he informed, "I'm the boss of what's left of this outfit and I forbid you to die on me, see?"

"Not yet," agreed Little Koo—and faithfully kept his promise for ten days.

First sign that he was about to renege came when he fell flat on his face, clawed momentarily at the earth, forced himself to his feet and stumbled on. After ten yards he caught up with the waiting Mallet, refused to let himself fall again. The result was peculiar.

He stood swaying as he faced Mallet, his features the color of old ivory. His knees bent slowly, ever so slowly, as if being pulled down in spite of all his efforts to prevent them. In this manner he reached kneeling position, murmured apologetically, "Cannot help," and bowed forward into Mallet's ready arms.

Stripping him of gun, ammunition-belt and pack, Mallet laid him on a mossy bank while Feeny circled around whining querulously. The blue sun poured through a leaf-gap and burned the back of his neck while he stooped over Little Koo and tried to bring him round

"Don't skip out, d'you hear?" An urgent, imperative shake. "Dont go away like all the others did. I'm not going to make a hole for you. I refuse to do it." He snatched up the spade, flung it into the jungle. A pulse was beating in his forehead. "See, I've thrown it away. It's not going to be used. Never, never, never. Neither for you nor for me." He patted the ivory cheeks. "Wake up, will you? *Wake up!*"

Little Koo obeyed, woke up, rolled onto his side and was sick. When he had finished, Mallet lugged him to his feet, held him by the shoulders.

"Okay now?" he asked anxiously.

"Plenty weak." Little Koo slumped in his grasp.

"We'll sit a bit."

Lowering the other, he squatted on the bank, took Little Koo's head in his lap. Feeny barked an agitated warning as huge, sinuous coils showed among the growths fifty yards away. Mallet snatched up the automatic, fired four shots. The coils slid rapidly away, not fearing the bullets but hating the noise. He continued to nurse Little Koo, cursing his own impotence and appealing to the head cradled in his arms.

"Make a fight for it, little feller. There's a long, long way to go but we can do it if we stick together. We've come a long way already. You're not going to give in now, are you?"

The sun sank into the horizon and Feeny whined and darkness came until the three moons appeared. Still Mallet sat holding Little Koo and occasionally making appeals to ears that did not hear. It seemed to him that the blue sun had churned up his own mind, making his thoughts muddled and out of control.

It seemed to him that he was holding in his protecting arms not only Little Koo but also all the others who had gone. Symes and Paton, the Mihailoviks, Kessler and Sammy. Aye, and all those he had known in

long-gone eons where there had existed a great silver cylinder called the *Star Queen.*

And it seemed to him that the voice was calling more strongly, more insistently than ever, though for the life of him he could not determine precisely what it was trying to say.

With the dawn he was sitting in dew-dampened clothes, his eyes red-rimmed and baggy. Little Koo was still alive but senseless, incapable of response. Apparently in a complete stupor as though heavily drugged.

That last thought reminded Mallet that people like Little Koo were alleged to be incurable opium addicts. Perhaps he had a secret cache of the stuff either in his pack or on his person. He searched both and made a thorough job of it. No opium. An unknown number of days ago he'd frisked Sammy the same way. No diamonds. Looked as if nobody went around with the junk they were generally reputed to carry.

In some ways the world of life is a great big damnable lie. In some ways the moment of death is the moment of truth. Little Koo had nothing worthy of note except a cracked and faded picture of a tipsy-roofed village with mountains in the background. Just that. Nothing more. His paradise. His heaven upon Earth.

"I'll get you there," said Mallet, "if it's the last thing I do."

Buckling the gun and ammo-belt to his waist, he stuffed one pack with as much as it would hold, fastened it in reverse so that it hung upon his chest instead of his back. Part of the first-aid kit he crammed into his pockets, the rest he left upon the bank. Sticking a machete point-first into the ground so that its handle could be grasped without bending for it, he hoisted Little Koo onto his back, gripped his two thin wrists in a hairy paw, took the machete in the other hand and set off.

Much relieved by this renewed activity, Feeny pranced ahead, sniffing here and there, glancing behind at intervals to make sure that he was followed. Half an hour's march, five minutes' rest; half an hour's march, five minutes' rest. It was a good thing the fates had given him a big, powerful body while ordaining that Little Koo should be a shrivelled wisp of a man.

Mallet began to talk as he went along. Sometimes to Little Koo who hung limp and silent over one broad shoulder. Sometimes to Feeny who with incomparable loyalty accepted any and every eccentricity as the most natural thing in the world. And sometimes he spoke to nobody at all, uttering angry phrases born of the blue sun, the alien atmosphere. He was functioning physically but breaking mentally and did not know it.

At the eighth rest-period Little Koo made a faint rattling sound in his throat, opened his black eyes for the first time since yesterday and whispered, "So sorry."

Then in his own quiet manner he slipped away to wherever Little Koos go. And Mallet could not see that he had gone. He picked him

up, bore him through the green hell, put him down, picked him up, carried him onward mile after weary mile, hour after burning hour. Often he talked to him and most times Little Koo answered.

"We're getting there, little feller. Done fifty miles today. What d'you think of that?"

"Very good," the dead face would say in perfect English.

"Maybe we'll do a hundred tomorrow. Under the blue sun. It's trying to burn me down but I won't let it. It stabs right into my brain and says, 'Drop, damn you, drop!' but I won't drop, see? That's Bill Mallet for you. I spit upon the blue sun." Then he'd spit to demonstrate while Little Koo lay stricken dumb with admiration. "Next Thursday week we'll be in the dome. They'll fix up a pair of legs for Sammy. Next Tuesday month we'll be outward bound for Earth." He'd snort in triumph. "Home for Christmas, eh?"

"You bet!" Little Koo would respond with suitable enthusiasm.

"Beef bones for Feeny," he'd add, speaking to the dog. "How'd you like that?"

"I can hardly wait," Feeny would say, running eagerly ahead.

It is so wonderful to have true comrades in what otherwise would be a dreadful solitude.

To hear them speak—they and the voice that kept calling, calling.

HE'D turned east in his delirium. The compass lay where it had been dropped two days ago: miles away under a beautiful orchid that stank. He did not know east from west, north from south, but his big body kept on going like a machine that stubbornly refuses to run down. And all the time Feeny remained a jump in advance, steering him away from underground traps daytimes, watching over him by night.

His face was scalded brick-red and etched with deep lines blackened by dust and sweat. A coarse and ragged beard straggled onto his chest. His eyeballs were bloodshot, his pupils dilated, but his body kept on going with robotic single-mindedness.

Sometimes he dug the point of his machete into the earth, drew his gun, fired more or less in the direction of things that would not have been deterred from attacking had the weapon been silent, but fled because they could not bear the sonic blast accompanying the bullets. A couple of times he shot at dragons that existed only in his fevered imagination. Every time he stopped he chatted with Little Koo and Feeny, threw brilliant witticisms at them and invariably got the most amusing replies.

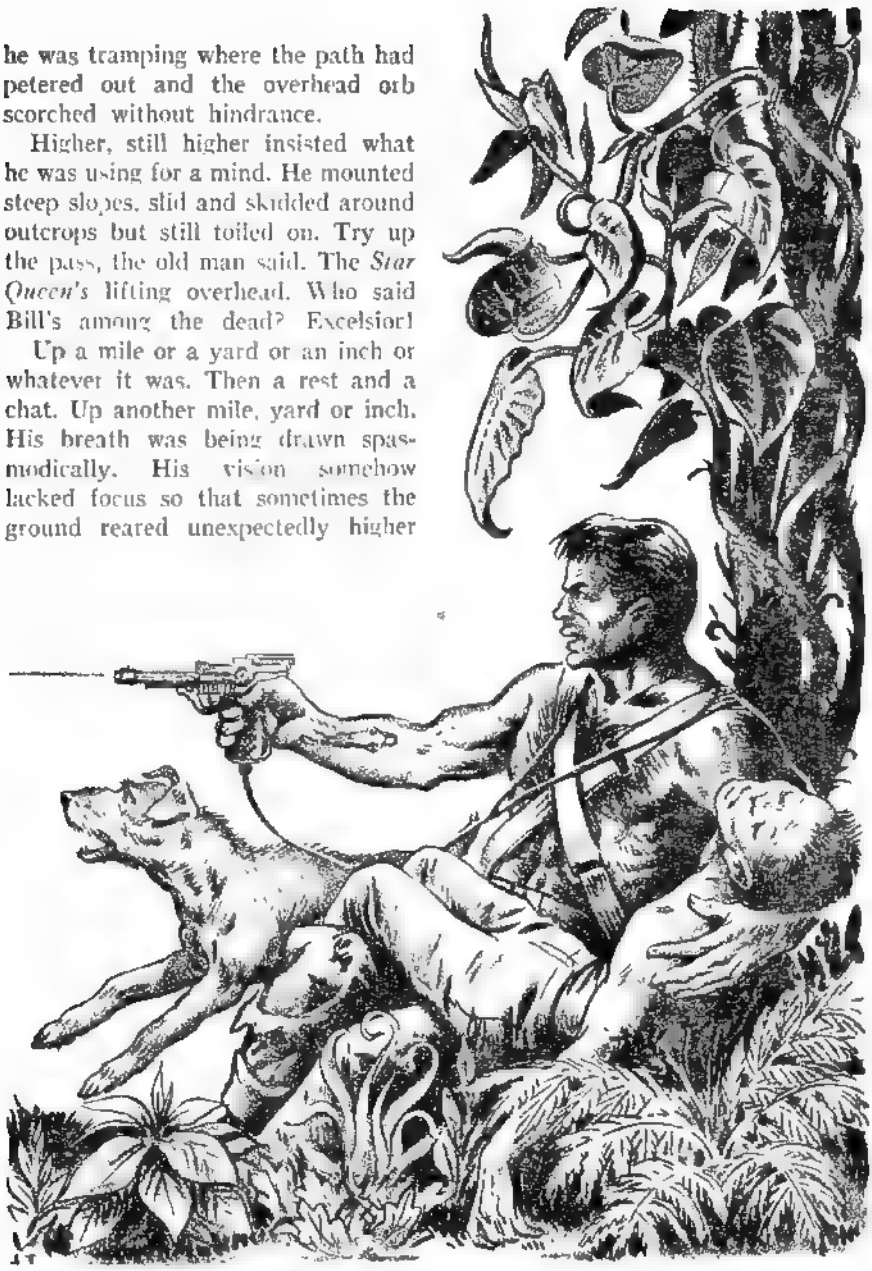
Strangely enough he never forgot to feed the dog. Now and again he became so engrossed in their three-sided conversations that he completely overlooked the need to do some eating himself, but invariably he opened a pack for Feeny.

The ground rose considerably as he hit the end spur of a range of mountains. The jungle shrank away from the rocks so that in due time

he was tramping where the path had petered out and the overhead orb scorched without hindrance.

Higher, still higher insisted what he was using for a mind. He mounted steep slopes, slid and skidded around outcrops but still toiled on. Try up the pass, the old man said. The *Star Queen's* lifting overhead. Who said Bill's among the dead? Excelsior!

Up a mile or a yard or an inch or whatever it was. Then a rest and a chat. Up another mile, yard or inch. His breath was being drawn spasmodically. His vision somehow lacked focus so that sometimes the ground reared unexpectedly higher



or went dead flat and his feet were caught unaware by these swift changes of angle.

There was a pair of boney wrists pulling tremendously at his left hand and something dark and noisy dodging about in front of his stumbling feet. There were sounds all around, and high in the sky, and deep inside him, blasting this world of silence, converting it to one of confusing uproar.

Oh, the barking and howling of the thing in front, and the *whuyoum-whuyoum* throbbing from somewhere near that bitter furnace of a sun. And the voice now sounding thunderously inside him so that for once he could hear what it was saying.

"Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden."

He didn't give a darn for the voice. He never had done. Maybe it existed, maybe it didn't. But it used one word that interested him. Just one word.

All, it said.

It wasn't particular.

It had no preferences.

It said *all*.

"Quite right, too!" he approved and promptly plunged forward like a stricken bull and lay among the rocks while the brown thing licked his face and whimpered and the blue sun seared the alien soil.

THE *whuyoum-whuyoum* lowered from its place in the sun and dropped a long thin line with something like a great black spider at its end. The spider touched earth, split in two, became a pair of drab-uniformed men wearing tiny filters in their nostrils.

Tail vibrating furiously, Feeny sprang at one, tried to lap the skin off his face. The victim picked him up, held him, pulling his ears and patting.

The other bent over the bodies, went back to the line, spoke into a small instrument dangling from it.

"Take credit for supersharp eyes, Al. You were right. It's one guy carrying another." A pause followed by, "They can't be from anywhere else but that lifeboat. Pity they didn't stay by it seeing we picked up its trace as it came down."

"Took us ten days to locate it even then," came back the pilot's voice from the helicopter above. "They'd have lost patience and taken to the trails just the same." He mused a moment, went on, "Reckon I'd better call the dome on the shortwave, get them to send along a patrol to follow the routes back from here to the boat. If there are any more survivors they'll be stuck somewhere along those paths."

"What d'you mean, any more? These two are decidedly dead. The only survivor is a dog."

"We'd better look all the same."

"Okay." Leaving the line, the speaker returned to his companion.

"The big bruiser pegged out recently," informed the latter. "We were too late by mere minutes. The other one has been dead about four days."

"Then why the heck was he car-

rying him?"

"Don't ask me. Maybe it was his best pal."

"What, a dried-up little Chink? Don't be silly!"

He'd never had reason to hear a voice.

All, it says.

THE END

The COMING *of the* SAUCERS

By

KENNETH ARNOLD and RAY PALMER

Ever since Kenneth Arnold first saw the mystery disks, the utmost confusion has existed — due to official and unofficial censorship, hoaxes, false reports, biased analyses, publicity hungry yellow newspaper sheets and sensation magazines, military investigation, "classification" and "top secret" designations. Now this "smog" of misinformation is cleared away, replaced by facts, by the two men who know most about the disks.

PRIVATELY PRINTED · NO CENSORSHIP!

After four years of what amounted to official and public persecution, ridicule, fantastic accusations of trickery, the publishers of this book have decided to avoid even the possibility of editorial "Interference" in presenting the truth and nothing but the truth. They are printing a limited number of copies at their own expense, in an effort to prove their integrity and to set this very important matter straight. These copies are not being offered to book dealers, but solely to those persons vitally interested in the truth about the saucers!

BOOK NOW BEING DELIVERED

Special Pre-Publication Price $4

After publication, this book will sell for $5. The book is being delivered by the binder, and we will accept advance orders by OTHER WORLDS readers at the low price. Order NOW!

ONLY PREPAID ORDERS ACCEPTED — ORDER TODAY FROM

RAY PALMER

RT. 2, BOX 36

AMHERST, WISCONSIN

By
H. B. Fyfe

FAST PASSAGE

Illustration by Bill Terry

Lanston couldn't pay his debts unless he could get back to Terra and raise some money — but the local laws forbad his leaving Corsha until his debts were paid. Quite a predicament, but Lanston had an angle. . .

BILL Lanston's blue eyes all but shot sparks as he leaned his lanky, six-foot-two frame across the desk of the Terran consul on Corsha, fourth planet of a star far enough from Sol to be known only by a number. His reddish hair was rumpled.

"Mr. Axelrod!" he protested.

John Axelrod raised a hand to supplement his icy stare.

"My dear Lanston," he said, choosing each word with a precision that implied repugnance, "permit me to repeat—I trust for the last time—under existing regulations, you are not eligible for free transportation back to Terra."

He almost smiled as Lanston clenched his fists and sought for words. Almost, not quite.

"I can't see where you got the idea," he continued. "The Terran government is not a charitable organization. If it offered to transport in luxury every small-time promoter who came to Corsha expecting to make money out of thin air—"

"Look, Mr. Axelrod!" Lanston exploded. "I didn't ask for any first-class luxury passage! I just want to get *off* this jungle-rotting planet any way I can! I admit I'm no pioneer. Why is there some damfool rule to spoil my every try to clear out?"

Axelrod sighed primly without changing expression, and hitched a sheaf of papers across his desk. Letting his eyes drift down to them, he suffered the remainder of Lanston's tirade in disapproving silence.

"I don't have the price of the passage back to Terra," said the younger man, pacing up and down before the desk. "All right! I'm willing to work—but you can't get into a crew from Corsha without a union card, a space license, *and* the luck to have some third assistant jet jammer get blind enough to jump ship."

The consul turned a page and partially hid a yawn.

"Neither will you let me make any kind of deal for what's left of my trading company, to scrape up the money. Is it making you happier to see me starving on your doorstep?"

Axelrod deserted his report regretfully.

"My dear Lanston," he reproved, "I can't interfere with the local colonial debt laws. You should have thought of them before starting your enterprise on half a zipper. It is not *my* order that halted your operations until you can refinance."

Lanston growled and clapped one palm to his forehead.

"Of course," Axelrod finished, "for the sake of Terran-colonial relations, I had to forbid you to leave Corsha while your debts remain unpaid."

"Fine! And how will I pay them, ever, unless I get away from here long enough to raise some cash?"

Axelrod stared reflectively into space as he carefully aligned the papers before him. When the edges of the pages were almost exactly parallel with those of the shiny desk-top, he delivered his considered judgment.

"Being Terran consul on Corsha, and not a local banker, Mr. Lanston, I am hardly qualified to advise

you on that point. Now, if you will excuse me . . . .?"

He tapped the papers gently with the well-manicured nail on his forefinger. Lanston pivoted and drifted toward the door in the midst of a reddish haze, hoping he could get outside before he committed murder. Axelrod's precise tones halted him in the doorway.

"Just one thing, Mr. Lanston! There have been rumors to the effect that you have been . . . ah . . . negotiating the purchase of a certain old space vessel. I do hope you are not contemplating. . .er. . . *skipping out,* as I believe the term is used!"

Lanston recalled later that in the ensuing moment of tense silence he had distinctly heard the muted hum of the handsome electric clock on the wall.

Then he slammed the door with a violence that shook the paneled walls and brought a startled squeak from Axelrod's pert blonde receptionist. Lanston passed through the outer office like a high gale.

In the corridor outside, people skipped nimbly from his path; and Lanston presently came to himself in the yellowish sun-glare of the street.

How did he know about that ship deal? he asked himself, as he strode along ignoring the shop displays of fancy gadgets imported from Terra and other worlds. *The old clam has been spying on me—it's a wonder I don't have icicles on the back of my collar! How does that friendly-looking receptionist stand working for—?*

Lanston stopped dead at a crossing to consider the possibility that Consul Axelrod might be partially human. He snorted at the thought, but the moment had calmed him enough to look about for a public visio booth.

He dialed the numbers of two or three Terran-style taverns until he located the man he wanted. The visage that appeared on the screen was pleasant, pudgy, and pinkish—an effect considerably dampened by the shrewd glitter of the little green eyes.

"Hello, Foster!" Lanston greeted it. "How are you?"

"Hi, Bill. Half-lit; but this place you steered me to promises to supply a stomach pump free. What's up?"

"In a nutshell—how about that ship for trading company deal?"

The pinkish face moved slightly on the screen, then became bland.

"You changed your mind mighty fast"

"My health calls for a change of climate," replied Lanston.

Foster regarded him with a grin.

"Come to think of it," he commented, examining Lanston's flushed features, "you *do* look a shade on the high-pressure side. Maybe a little change of gravity—"

"Okay, I'll meet you at your hotel in an hour," the other cut him short. "I have to see a friend of mine out at the spaceport. He's calculating curves for that new super-liner that's blasting off tomorrow, and I figure a copy would help me save astrogation time."

"It might at that," agreed Foster.

"But don't forget that the *Nova* is the last word and a lot faster on the jump than an old freighter like the *Saphire*. They even have a brand-new type of artificial gravity on her."

"They can have pinwheels and pennants if they like. I just want to know the general direction of Sol. There *is* one little favor you might do me, though."

"What's that?"

"After I have your used but sturdy spaceship and you're sitting in the office of my modest but expandable import company, you might let me have a day or two to try out the ship before you register the new ownership with the Terran consul."

Foster winked, and asked no questions.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later, Lanston was out of the bag, as far as being anchored to Corsha was concerned. What else he had gotten himself into, he was not quite sure.

He had avoided the formalities of clearing for outer space for the simple reason that he intended to ape the course of the *Nova* as soon as he escaped Corsha's atmosphere, instead of carrying out a routine trading expedition to one of the other planets in the system. Much red tape had been saved thereby, but Lanston was beginning to wonder if some of it might not have been handy for holding his old rocket together.

Maybe she was fully supplied when I got her, he thought, *but it's sure taking a lot of air to keep the pressure up. I wonder how many pinpoint leaks she has, and where?*

He could not, he decided as he checked his course against that planned for the *Nova*, claim that he had actually been cheated, considering the state of the "business" he had handed over to Foster. The *Saphire* would have been only reasonably risky as a means of travel to Corsha's sister planets. It would be Lanston's own fault if he got into trouble by heading into interstellar space.

"But it's the only way!" he growled. "Otherwise, I'd gimp around Corsha till I rotted!"

Satisfied with the course achieved by his rather amateur piloting—he had not considered it necessary to get an interstellar license at the spaceport—Lanston plugged in the antiquated detectors to the general alarm system and went to check his fuel tanks. He hoped he would never have to draw upon their contents again, but it was a good idea to know how much was left.

"Well, it seems to work," he admitted, after a look at the rocket system, "even if she *is* patched together like a soapbox scooter. Foster sure didn't lose on this deal!"

The *Saphire* had been designed for interplanetary or short interstellar hops with small cargoes and a crew of about ten. At some time, she had been converted so that two or three men, with a reckless faith in automatic gadgets, could handle her. Storage space for food, oxygen, water, and similar necessities had been economized correspondingly, as had

the air-conditioning and other furnishings.

"Outfitted for shoestring tramp operation," muttered Lanston. "Well, with any luck, I won't have to keep her long."

He set the cheap, inadequate detectors for close scanning of a certain sector of space. The most casual comparison of his aim with the direction of flight would have turned any experienced spaceman ashen. The *Saphire* plunged blindly ahead, scanning cautiously back toward Corsha.

That ought to do, he thought. *Now, to see if there's a bunk that won't come loose from the bulkhead!*

He eased into one without removing his clothes, and eyed a rusty patch overhead until he dozed off.

The alarms awoke him several hours later. He yawned, stretched, and made his way to the control room without haste.

Such of the instruments as he could read and understand offered an estimate of the distance between him and the ship rapidly overhauling the *Saphire*. Lanston decided he had several hours to make ready.

As soon as he thought the overtaking ship could receive his signals, he set the automatic transmitter to sending out distress calls.

Lanston spent the last hour watching the trim bulk of the *Nova* swell out of the blackness and creep abreast of the old freighter. He had to use the observation telescope, since the luxury liner never did come close enough to be seen by the naked eye.

Instead, they sent across an emergency rocket. Lanston shoved a few papers into his pocket to prove ownership of the *Saphire* if need be, squirmed into a spacesuit, and hustled out through the airlock to receive the magnetic grapple of the small rocket.

He kicked it loose, and took a firm grip on the line. Then, he jumped off and drifted to the hull of the emergency vessel, where he was presently admitted to the airlock.

"What's the idea banging on the port like that?" demanded the grizzled spaceman who helped him out of his suit.

"Let's not waste any time!" said Lanston in urgent tones.

"What's the matter?" inquired an officer from the entrance of the tiny control room. "Don't you want us to see if there's anything to be done?"

Lanston glanced at him. He was slightly under medium height, and seemed even shorter because he was so chunky. His uniform sleeves were noticeably tight about the shoulders. Dark brown hair curled from under the uniform cap set precisely above a broad, tanned face.

His voice was deep and not unpleasant, except for a tone of suspicion.

"There's nothing to be done," said the former trader. "And I was the only one aboard, anyway."

"Let's get back, then," said the other, and Lanston relaxed.

He offered a brief, censored account of his dealings on Corsha when the officer—who turned out to be

John Kurian, the chief pilot—led him to the shiny, gadget-packed control room. Lanston was about to comment on the longitudinal layout of the decks, which was in contrast to the usual vertical sections climbing from jets to nose, when Kurian presented him noncommittally to the commander of the *Nova*.

Captain James Stower was a beefy, graying man. He seemed to think twice when the erstwhile trader introduced himself as "Captain" Lanston. Otherwise, he was affable enough, perhaps in anticipation of reporting the comparatively rare feat of a rescue in space. Lanston neglected to mention that he was a captain with neither crew nor cargo.

"I don't know what caused the leakage," he concluded his highly imaginative story, "but it seemed as if the fuel was volatilizing and seeping into all compartments except the control section I had sealed off. I didn't find out till too late."

He waited for suspicious questions, especially from Kurian, who struck him as being anything but slow on the uptake.

Instead, the captain and his chief officer stared at each other meaningfully. Stower rapped cryptically upon the metal bulkhead with one knuckle.

"I don't know that it proves anything," Kurian objected, but Stower cut him off with a warning jerk of the thumb toward the two or three assistants on duty in the main part of the control room, forward from the extension of the corridor where they stood.

"Have the steward find Mr.—ah . . . *Captain* Lanston a place to sleep," he ordered quickly. "Then, when you check the emergency jet you used, take a look at *our* fuel tanks!"

Lanston, overwhelmed by relief at being taken at face value, meekly followed the solid shoulders of Kurian down the corridor without raising any questions. He wondered idly if the chief pilot had ever been a wrestler.

Not a pro, anyway, he decided. *Not crunched up. In fact, he's not a bad-looking guy, but I wouldn't want those big mitts wrapped around my throat.*

They went down a short stairway and passed through two doorways that Lanston recognized for ports through airtight bulkheads. In a comfortably large lounge which was in the process of being rearranged after one section of the passengers had dined, Kurian delivered him to a double-chinned little fellow in a white jacket.

"Higgins," he said, "this is . . . Captain Lanston. Find someplace for him to stay. He had to abandon his ship just now."

Higgins raised his eyebrows to stare at Lanston as the pilot departed aft. His bulging, light-blue eyes were eagerly curious as he congratulated Lanston upon his escape.

"Lucky for me you people came along," admitted Lanston.

Higgins left his assistants to carry on with reconverting the dining saloon to a lounge, and led Lanston forward again.

"This second section holds the largest number of passenger cabins, Captain," he told his charge in his whiskey tenor. "There are more in the section we just left, along with the recreation space, and room for the crew in Section One."

He had guided Lanston to a flight of stairs as he spoke, and they presently reached the deck one level above that of the control room. Higgins led the way toward the center of the ship, and Lanston became confused after a few steps.

Losing my sense of direction, he thought. *Wonder why there isn't a single main corridor?*

"This is the only unoccupied suite this jump," said Higgins, sliding open a door. "We call it the 'Galactic Suite' and I understand, sir, that the cost matches the name."

Lanston peered in at a luxuriously furnished chamber. Although the furniture was doubtless as light in weight as was possible to make it, the deceptive design suggested solid comfort—a marked novelty for a spaceship.

"If you'd rather, Captain," said Higgins anxiously, "I could ask some of the engineering officers to double up."

"Oh . . . no," replied Lanston, trying to seem unimpressed. "I don't like to put them to that trouble. After all, engineers are human too."

"Yes, sir. Heh-heh! I'll see if I can have a change of clothes for you by the time you arise, Captain."

"Fine, fine!" Lanston beamed, rubbing his toe over an imitation floor fabric that looked remarkably like carpet.

"I'd offer to send in a tray," Higgins apologized, backing to the door, "but we're so short handed that we have to restrict meals to the regular hours."

"Why's that?" asked Lanston.

"Oh, a couple of cooks slipped the jets along with others of the crew on the last few planets."

Lanston suddenly lost his complacency. He reached out a long arm to draw Higgins gently inside the door again. With the other hand, he thoughtfully ruffled his reddish hair.

"What's the matter with this bottle?" he demanded abruptly. "Crew deserting so far from Terra . . . captain and pilot making funny faces when I said my fuel tanks leaked . . . ?"

Higgins started uncomfortably, and twisted his second chin into his collar.

"We-ell . . . harumph . . . I might's well tell you, Captain. Captain Stower thinks we're passing through some sort of rays in this part of space that work on the metal in the hull—"

He broke off to glance guiltily over his shoulder.

"That's just rumor, o' course. You understand, I wasn't supposed to be listening. Besides, I don't believe it any more 'n the ones that slipped the jets did."

"What *do* you believe?"

"It's the new grav system!"

Lanston blinked. He wondered if he had stayed on Corsha too long. There were stories of traders and

planet jumpers who lived on the fringes of civilization until they became a little "variable."

"The grav system?"

"Yes, sir. You see, it isn't like the old type, with thousands of cells built in between the decks and the vertical layout. The whole ship is put together around a core of empty space, an' the attraction is generated in there."

Lanston eyed him, beginning to worry. By now, the fat little steward was almost spluttering in his haste to speak. He seemed definitely scared, now that he had let the mask slip.

"A core of empty space?" asked Lanston. "You mean just open, or a vacuum?"

"An honest-to-galaxy vacuum. It runs from just this side of the main jets to under the control room. You might say it's something like an electromagnet, 'cept it works on more than just metal. What it does to metal —well, nobody knows, I guess, but Mr. Kurian said something once about making it tired. I think that was what he said."

The light blue eyes, which had been staring into emptiness over Lanston's shoulder, refocused. Higgins abruptly shut his mouth, as if aware that he had been babbling.

"Did he say 'fatigued'?" asked Lanston, as the steward sidled toward the door again.

"I think maybe it was something like that, Captain. I—you'll have to excuse me. The lounge . . . ?"

He edged out into the corridor as he spoke, and slid the door shut. Lanston shrugged.

"Hope I don't find myself marooned at the next planet the *Nova* touches," he muttered. "If they lay her up for over-hauling, I might just as well have kept the old *Saphire*."

He explored the facilities of the suite. The bedroom off the chamber where Higgins left him was too inviting after the rigid bunk of the *Saphire*. He decided to enjoy the soft mattress before someone thought up questions about his future plans.

The appointments did not include spare pajamas, so he went to bed in his underwear. Within a few minutes, an unsuspected exhaustion resulting from his tense hours waiting to be picked up left him sound asleep.

"Beats buying a ticket, anyway," he congratulated himself as he pulled up the single lightweight blanket he had chosen.

He was awakened finally by voices in the outer room.

"Ah, breakfast," he murmured, and sat up expectantly.

He glanced at his wrist watch, and was surprised to find that he had slept nine hours. Then he looked up as he heard a gasp from the direction of the door.

"Good morning!" he said enthusiastically. "Are *you* from the steward's department?"

The girl in the doorway stared at him coldly. She was of slightly less than medium height, and anything but scrawny. Her brown, shoulder-length hair had enough gold in it to

pass as blonde. Against a peaches and cream complexion, her lips glowed bright red. Lanston wished fleetingly that they were less drawn down with displeasure at the corners.

"Willy!" she called over her shoulder, ignoring his question. "There's someone here."

Lanston admired her silhouette against the light that had been turned on in the outer chamber, and tried to tell himself that the trace of petulance in the husky voice might be justified by surprise. He became sufficiently aware of his surroundings to hitch up the light blanket under which he had slept.

Over the girl's shoulder appeared the face of a man. To Lanston's surprise, for she had spoken as if to an intimate, the face was middle-aged and puffy with high living.

"Who are you?" demanded the newcomer in a blustering tone.

Lanston noticed as "Willy" edged cautiously past the girl that the man was growing a paunch to match his graying hair. The clothes draping the stocky figure, however, were expensive.

Must be her father, thought Lanston, determining to offer no offense to anyone in such an influential position. *She might call him by his first name. Lots of people do nowadays.*

Then he noticed further the way the girl twitched aside just before her companion's second hand came into view, and he decided that the caress had been most un-paternal.

"Uh . . . I'm Captain Lanston," he answered, hastily clearing his throat as they waited, staring. "Who are you?"

"Oh, the fellow they fished out of space last night? I'm Wilson Boley and this is Miss Knapp."

Lanston waited for admiring questions about his escape. There was merely silence.

At last, Boley fidgeted and muttered something about "coming back later to inspect the suite," and the couple turned to leave.

They had taken only a step when a familiar voice greeted them.

"Good morning, Miss Knapp . . . Mr. Boley."

"Ah, hello there, Higgins," said Lanston as the steward reached the doorway. "What's for breakfast?"

He tried to adopt the mien of the hardened spaceman awaking lighthearted after a brush with lonely death. Something spoiled the effect. Higgins glared at him, and wormed his way inside past Boley and the girl with a gross lack of solicitude.

"Get outa that bed, Lanston!" he barked.

The tone of his husky tenor was markedly at variance with the respect he had shown Lanston only a few hours earlier.

"We'd better go, Julie," Boley advised the girl.

"Huh?" grunted the man from Corsha unpleasantly conscious of the facts that the girl and Boley had paused to stare back at him and that two burly spacemen had moved into view just beyond the door.

"Captain Stower wasn't even close to getting up to interstellar speed

yet," said Higgins significantly.

"I don't get it," muttered Lanston, wondering what that had to do with him.

"Captain Stower got it!" retorted Higgins. "The answer to his radio back to Corsha. You got quite a reputation, Bud!"

Lanston swung his feet over the edge of the bed and reached for his pants and shirt. Confused momentarily at being the center of attraction, he hesitated.

Axelrod, of course! he told himself furiously. *HE wouldn't miss the chance! Well, Stower and Kurian may have my orbit plotted now, but they'll have to take me along whether they like it or not. And once on Terra, I'll find a way to stay!*

"Let's come back later, Julie," Boley urged.

Julie Knapp giggled.

"*Captain* Lanston, he called himself!" she murmured. "What will they do with him, Willy? Do you think you could get the captain to assign him to our table? Poor Higgins is so short of help!"

By this time, on Higgins' signal, the two husky crewmen reached Lanston. They began to pick him up, blanket and all, with the evident intention of seeking out the nearest disposal chute.

"Hey!" yelped the ex-trader. "You can't pull this stuff! I demand to see the captain!"

"You will, you will; that's where we're going," one of them assured him grimly.

"Well, why can't I get dressed first?" inquired Lanston, feeling at a distinct disadvantage as the blanket began to slip.

"Captain said to hurry," snapped Higgins.

And so they hurried.

Somewhere out in the corridor, Lanston managed to get his feet under him and saved himself from being dragged. He clung futilely to his shirt and trousers, which was just as well. By the time his two escorts deposited him before Captain Stower in the little foyer at the rear of the control room, the blanket was a distant memory along with the fading laughter of Julie Knapp.

At a gesture from Stower, the crewmen released Lanston and departed, sliding the door shut behind them.

"You cheap little jet-hopper!" sneered the beefy commander. "*Captain* Lanston, eh? Why, if they didn't want you back on Corsha so badly, I'd have you planted out on the nose for a frozen figurehead!"

"What do they want of me?" asked Lanston, considering it beneath him to object to the term "little," even though Stower had to look up to glare at him.

"Ask Mr. Kurian! I have other things to do."

He turned away and marched out of the compartment, his shoulders set indignantly. Kurian, who had drifted up during the exchange, surveyed Lanston unsmilingly.

"I can't quote the whole message," he said, "but it mentioned skipping out on debts, failing to get official clearance before blasting off, operat-

ing a spaceship illegally, and . . . oh, a lot more. You ought to be good for life!"

Lanston finished hopping on one bare foot while he thrust the other into a leg of his pants. He pulled up the latter and immediately felt braver.

"That's just hearsay," he declared, fumbling for a sleeve of his shirt. "We'll get that all straightened out when I reach Terra."

"Don't know how you're planning to get that far," Kurian replied. "Our next stop, before we get to Centaurus, is Johanssen III. I guess we can find something to keep you busy till then."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You don't think you're getting a free ride after that yarn you fed us, do you? We're short of men in the galley and in the rocket room both. Take your choice."

"Like hell I will!" Lanston yelled. "I owe you for picking me out of space, but I expect you to treat me like a distressed spaceman. Don't start pushing!"

He shrugged into his shirt, noting the flush that was spreading over the pilot's tanned, regular features.

"I can see why they want you back on Corsha," said Kurian, "but don't think you can con me, Red! I have my own troubles without arguing with you."

"So I've heard," sneered Lanston. "Seems to me you people run a pretty lousy ship, or else why does the crew keep melting away?"

Kurian stepped closer, scowling. With one muscular hand, he gathered the front of Lanston's shirt.

"Now, look—!" he began.

Lanston twisted free and shoved the pilot back with a long arm.

Kurian recovered his balance and thrust his face into that of the trader. He had to stand on tip-toe to manage it, but Lanston was made uncomfortably aware of the other's chunky chest and breadth of shoulder.

"Just get this through that solid bone antenna hung between your ears," Kurian growled. "If the Old Man says you're to help the stewards to work out your passage, then you help the stewards! Or would you rather not eat from here to Johanssen III?"

"You picked me up on your own initiative," declared Lanston, feeling distinctly ungrateful but convinced from his experiences with Axelrod that it was a mistake ever to yield an inch. "I'm entitled to passage—*Ow!*"

Kurian, crowding even closer, had trod upon his bare toes.

"Watch what you're doing!" yelped the victim, hopping on one foot while he tried to hold the injured members.

"I will if you cut out all this back talk," promised Kurian.

He slid open the door suggestively and took Lanston's elbow in his big hand.

Lanston drew away and dropped his foot to the deck. He thought his toes must still be numb, for the metal did not feel as hard to his unshod

foot as he expected.

Kurian, groping for a hold of any kind, slipped his hand down to the other's waistband and started to drag him toward the doorway. Lanston hacked him across the forearm with the edge of his left hand to break the grip. Kurian muttered, and bulled him into the bulkhead, trying to pin him long enough to get a solid hold.

"All right, then!" said Lanston.

Kurian, misunderstanding, eased back a step. Lanston exploded an uppercut from down around his knees. It landed too high, on the cheekbone, but the pilot staggered back with a surprised grunt.

He fetched up against the opposite wall, recovering his balance just in time to save his head from clanging against the metal.

Get him first! Lanston warned himself, and sprang forward with his fist cocked.

From behind his own ear, he whipped across a vicious right Kurian, still blinking, but with his hands up now, jerked his head aside. Lanston's fist whistled past his left ear and sank into the metal bulkhead.

"Unh!" he grunted soulfully as Kurian countered with a jolt to the pit of the stomach.

He could almost feel his face turning white, and not from the effects of the punch.

His bright blue eyes bulging with horror, he stared at the bulkhead. For all he could see of his hand, the forearm ended at the wrist. He was suddenly aware of drops of sweat popping out upon his forehead.

His expression must have been ghastly, for Kurian pulled back the blow he had already started. Then he, too, turned pale as he saw what Lanston was gaping at.

The latter pulled gently on his imprisoned wrist.

A foot-square section of the bulkhead shattered softly, crumbling like a stale cookie about the spot where the fist had pierced it. Lanston was free.

"Wh-what kind of metal is *that?"* he whispered.

After a moment, he realized that he had not been answered. He turned to the pilot. Kurian looked decidedly ill.

Lanston backed two steps along the bulkhead. He rapped his knuckles on it at waist height, and was not reassured by the soggy *clunk*.

Like beating a cork gong, he thought.

"What kind of rocket have you got here, Kurian?" he demanded. "I hope the deck, at least, is solid!"

He stamped one bare foot to make sure.

"Careful!" shouted Kurian, rousing from his trance.

It was too late. Lanston had chosen the wrong spot.

"Yeeeow!" he yelled. His scalp prickled. "Get me out of this!"

His leg had plunged through the deck to the knee. As he sprawled forward with hands outstretched to break his fall, he felt the metal crumble away about the hole.

"Don't move!" Kurian snapped, springing toward the wider expanse

of the control room proper as if skittering over a carpet of eggs. "Newman! Monteforte! Get out of here on max jets!"

The incipient bellow of his voice did not fully disguise deep concern. As Lanston wriggled his foot frantically in the emptiness he could not see because of his sprawled position, the men on duty in the control room came sprinting to the rear.

"Easy there!" yelled Lanston at the same moment that Kurian roared, "Watch out!"

The double exhortation jerked one of the men up on his toes and he passed Lanston without incident; but the other, perhaps startled at the sponginess beneath his feet, took off in a frightened dive for the doorway.

He landed with a satisfying thump on a solid part of the deck, but the spot underfoot when he had jumped collapsed.

"Hey! There's nothing under me!" Lanston cried.

He looked up to find himself alone. Kurian had moved out of his view.

Keep calm now, Bill, he coached himself. *Slide up on it the way you did on the ice when you fell in skating!*

Cautiously, he inched his way forward. He happened to be facing that way, and he had a suspicion that trying to turn back to safer territory would only make matters worse. When he probed gently back with one foot, not daring to look over his shoulder for fear or rolling his weight onto one elbow, he could feel nothing.

A little more, now, he thought, *and I can grab that fire extinguisher rack.*

A large, cold drop of perspiration trickled deliberately down his forehead and into his right eye, stinging him into blinking rapidly.

He reached out for the extinguisher rack, and more of the deck crumpled beneath him. Somewhere in the distance aft, alarm bells were ringing.

"Hunh!" Lanston grunted suddenly, wondering what had struck him.

He abruptly lost his sense of direction, becoming unable to orient himself in regard to "up" or "down."

"Oh, hell!" he exclaimed, realizing what had happened. "Kurian got the grav field turned off."

The disappearance of the pilot was easily accounted for by the cutting of the generators and the sounding of the alarm bells. A moment later, Kurian returned, floating himself along the bulkhead to Lanston's left front at shoulder height.

"Steady . . . hold out your hand," he called, as he drifted across to the top of the rack toward which Lanston was straining. "There seem to be *some* solid spots left."

Holding up his hand gratefully, Lanston saw the pilot's fingers sunk gingerly into the bulkhead in a precarious grip.

Then his weightless body was hauled clear of the hole as Kurian stiffened against the tendency to pull himself downward toward Lanston. The latter looked back. The hole gaped blackly behind him.

"Not enough to walk on—even if we could walk," grunted Kurian. "Straighten yourself out, and I'll

pitch you across. Hey, Newman!"

"Go ahead!" answered one of the pair by the door.

Lanston saw them waiting as Kurian maneuvered him around like a child's toy balloon. He contorted and squirmed to get himself into position. Kurian gave a heave, sending him sailing across the intervening space. Lanston groped out frantically. He touched Newman's outstretched fingers and was hauled past the doorway.

"Careful what you take hold of," the blond youth warned. "It feels a little loose this side of the door too."

Then Kurian kicked off and flew toward them. Lanston reached out to help, but drew back his hand as Newman caught his chief.

"The first thing to do," said the pilot, "is to clear out of here far enough to be safe."

He glanced aft, whence a distant hubbub was already becoming noticeable.

"Monteforte!" he ordered. "Blast off and report this to the Old Man! Newman, scout the crew quarters! Lanston, help me get all the passengers out of Section Two!"

He flitted purposefully away in the wake of Monteforte, waving Lanston toward the first stairway to an upper level. A few moments later, the latter found himself knocking on a cabin door.

He would not have blamed the occupant for greeting him with astonishment, since he had overleaped his mark and been forced to knock on the door from the ceiling side.

Hearing no reply except a muffled shout, Lanston pulled himself down and slid the door open. It crashed back, teaching him to be wary of employing anything like normal strength to such habitual motions.

In mid-air before his eyes floated a slowly thrashing bundle of bedclothes. Estimating distance and angle carefully, Lanston flung himself at the bundle so as to carry it before him to the opposite wall, where an open closet offered handholds.

"Good God, boy!" exclaimed the lean, white-mustached gentleman who eventually emerged from the tangle. "Thought I was having a nightmare! What happened, boy?"

Lanston explained briefly that the artificial gravity had been turned off and that everyone was ordered aft to the next section. He sympathized with the old gentleman's "nightmare" as he recalled having the same sensation when his fist had pierced the bulkhead.

He worked along the side corridor, which was beginning to show signs of life as various people clawed their way out of the cabins and along the walls toward the main passageway.

"Grav field trouble," Lanston sang out repeatedly. "Everybody to the lounge!"

Having cleared that branch, he moved on to the next. The first person he encountered was "Willy" Boley, hanging in perplexity from a section of molding near the floor.

"Where's Miss Knapp?" asked Lanston, prudently attaching himself to a wall hook from which a chart of

the section had been knocked.

"Julie? Never mind that! Get me out of this! I keep falling 'up'." What turned us upside down?"

"I'm supposed to check on all the passengers in this section," insisted Lanston.

"Stateroom D-5, then! *Now*, will you pull me up? Never saw such a ridiculous condition!"

Lanston got hold of Boley's jacket and yanked the chubby older man to a position that had some semblance of being right side up.

"Whew! That looks better," sighed Boley, running a hand over his carefully arranged hair.

The motion moved him an inch or two off his feet. Lanston grabbed him again before he could begin to thrash about and make things worse.

"Better get back to the lounge," he advised. "The Captain wants everybody out of this section. I'll look for Miss Knapp."

"Good—I mean . . . thank you. I said I'd go out to get help and find out what happened . . . and then—"

"I understand," Lanston soothed him. "It's touch getting around when you're not used to being weightless. Let me give you a little tip."

"Yes?"

"Take off your shoes. That makes it easier to handle yourself along the walls; you get a toe-hold here and there."

Boley reflected.

"Sounds like a good idea," he admitted. "Thanks."

Lanston held him by the collar while he wrestled with the zippers of his shoes, then helped him toward the main corridor of this level with an energetic boost.

"Thanks a lot!" Boley flung back as he turned the corner.

Lanston collected the shoes from mid-air. He slipped them on his bare feet, finding them only slightly too small. Leaving the zippers open, he continued along the passage in search of other unwarned persons.

Number D-5 was at the end of the short hall. Lanston slid open the door and "walked" inside by holding firmly to the jamb. Julie Knapp sat frozen in a chrome and leather chair. Her knuckles were white with the force of her grip on the arm, and her ankles twined about the metal legs. The chair was upright, but about four feet off the deck.

"Oh, it's you!" said the girl. Then her expression lightened with hope. "Well, *do* something! Get me down!"

"Funny," murmured Lanston, as if to himself. "That's what they all say."

Julie Knapp looked at him. Down each cheek inched a large teardrop.

"Gosh, I'm glad to see *somebody*," she said unsteadily. "I don't know how long I've been here like this, wondering what happened. Is the ship wrecked?"

Lanston found he could just reach a drifting cushion and he tried for it with the idea of throwing it. The force should be enough to waft the girl toward the opposite wall.

"Well, *is* it?"

"Huh? Oh . . . no, not as far as I know. Kurian, the pilot, had to turn

off the grav field."

The cushion drifted maddeningly beyond his grasp. Lanston's muttered oath was mercifully obscured by Julie Knapp's sigh of relief.

"But then where is everybody?" she asked. "Willy said—"

"We're all supposed to go aft to the lounge," said Lanston. "I guess you'll just have to give up that chair. Jump, and I'll catch you."

For the first time, as she hopefully wriggled about to set her feet against the edge of the chair seat as he directed, Lanston found the leisure to take a good look at the girl. She wore a wide-skirted dress of gold-flecked brown material that suited her coloring perfectly. When she hoisted it above her knees to clear the way for the jump, Lanston stared frankly at her legs. There was a mischievous glint in her brown eyes which hinted that she might overlook the boldness.

Far as I'm concerned, I mean it as an honest compliment, he thought admiringly. *Now, if she lets go of that skirt on the way across, in this weightless—*

"Here goes!" announced Julie. "Don't drop me!"

Lanston was disappointed at the clever control she maintained over the billowing skirt, but he had nothing to complain of in the way she crooked an arm about his neck at the impact. He was thrown backward as the chair banged against the opposite wall from her kick and rebounded with a bent leg.

"You jumped too hard," he grunted, wrapping both arms around her pliant waist and hooking one foot on the door-jamb to avoid being carried out into the corridor.

He considered whether he should escort her to the lounge or take her along while he searched for other trapped passengers. He recalled the numbers he had directed aft on their own, and decided that the section must be nearly empty. He presumed that Kurian or someone else had taken care of the part below the plane of the control room.

Might be nice to hang around and see what develops, he thought, *but then there's the chance that some more of the ship will come loose from its rivets.*

Julie squirmed comfortably.

"All right; you caught me, I guess," she whispered. "But how do we get away from here."

"Yeah . . . uh . . . I guess we'd better get back," said Lanston regretfully, "You ready to try it?"

"Sure. I'm not scared anymore, now that you're with me."

Lanston wondered if he should try stopping at his temporary quarters for his jacket—and some socks, at least. He decided to find out first how conditions stacked up when they reached the next deck.

Taking Julie by the hand, he pushed off toward the main passage. He was beginning to get the knack of weightless maneuvering, and they made it with little difficulty. At one point, however, he elicited a squeal from Julie by snapping off a light bracket he seized as a handhold.

"What makes it like that?" the girl gasped, pushing back a strand of golden brown hair from her eyes.

Lanston watched the fragments of metal scatter through the air as he flicked his fingers.

"I . . . don't know, exactly," he said. "Maybe we'll find out when we get together with the rest."

Julie held on to his hand a shade tighter, but asked no further questions. When they arrived at the stairway, the going was easier because of the handrail. Lanston left Julie at the head of the steps momentarily while he flitted quickly back along the passage to yell down each side hall. No one answered.

"Captain Lanston!" called the girl as he returned.

"Make that 'Bill' if you like," he grinned. "What is it?"

"I think I heard somebody down there calling you."

"Let's go down and see, then," he replied, starting along the handrail.

Halfway down, his body began to drag over the treads. A second later, his full weight returned abruptly, and he tumbled head over heels the remaining distance to the deck

"They turned it back on!" he exclaimed.

The wind was knocked out of him as Julie landed across his shoulders. Before he could sit up, footsteps sounded and Kurian came out of a side corridor a few feet away.

"Oh, there you are," he commented, ignoring Lanston's betrayed expression. "This Miss Knapp?"

"That's right," Lanston grunted, helping her to her feet.

"Then everyone's accounted for. Let's get aft. The Old Man wants to seal off this section."

"How come the grav field is back on?" Lanston demanded.

"Good enough reason," said Kurian grimly as they hurried along the corridor. "We had a hull rupture in Section One! Air pressure! The Old Man figures the field is the lesser of two evils, being *some* restraint against everything bulging out."

Lanston pondered this in silence until they reached the lounge, almost unmindful of Julie's frightened grip on his hand.

They found that compartment crowded with milling people. Crewmen were posted at the exits to aid in dispersing the crowd to other recreation rooms and cabins in this section. The passengers, Lanston saw, were mostly scared and voluble; the spacemen seared and silent.

"Lanston," muttered the pilot, "how about opening the bar and passing out drinks? Might brighten the place some."

"I wish," retorted the trader, "that you would get over this idea of making some kind of steward out of me!"

"I'd like a little drink, Billy-boy," said Julie.

Lanston wavered, and Kurian added that the stewards were all busy. He produced the key to the bar.

"Oh, all right," yielded the trader. "Get me inside!"

Pushing through the hubbub, he murmured in Kurian's ear.

"How bad is it?"

"Who knows?" Kurian shrugged as he unlocked a door near the entrance. "That grav field must have been altering the structure of the metal, and I'm afraid it'll get worse."

"Yet you turned the generators back on!"

"They've been on for weeks. The ship must be on the point of becoming a sieve. This is just the last straw."

Inside the compartment, he pressed a button. Wall sections concealing the bar that began a few feet away slid upward, and Lanston stared out at a sea of faces swiveling to stare back at him. Someone raised a cheer, and the sea surged forward.

"Have fun!" grinned Kurian, and eased out the door to struggle against the current.

"Young man!" called a stoutish woman in a red dress entirely too bright for her fading hair. "Can you mix a Sirian Sling?"

Glancing at the rest of the lineup crowding the whole length of the short bar, Lanston realized who would be in a sling if he wasted any time with fancy creations.

"No, ma'am," he said bluntly.

Seizing the nearest bottle, he yanked the cork and growled to Julie, "Hand me a glass!"

He plopped the opened bottle and the highball glass down on the bar before the stoutish woman and reached for more bottles with both hands. Julie scurried along the bar, setting out glasses of every size and shape.

"That's the way!" someone approved loudly. "Don't fool around, Red! We may all be dead before we get it passed around!"

The speaker was promptly subdued by cries of protest. One complaining voice remained raised.

"Julie!" yelped Wilson Boley, his face even ruddier than usual with the effort of squeezing into a place at the end of the bar. "What are you doing in there? Come out immediately!"

"You'd better go," muttered Lanston. "They *are* all gaping at you."

"Am I hurting anybody's eyes, do you think?" she demanded pertly, but yielded when Lanston gave her a little shove.

"I'll help out, boy," said a voice near the door.

Lanston recognized the white-mustached old gentleman he had towed out of one of the staterooms. He stepped aside at the door to let the volunteer in as Julie slipped out to the waiting Boley.

"Always wanted to be a bartender," said the old gentleman. "I know a couple of recipes guaranteed to lay out this whole crowd stiff as a battery of rocket tubes. *Oops!* Did I step on your toe, sir?"

Boley glared in silent agony. Remembering whose shoes he wore, Lanston closed the door hastily and returned to his work.

Half an hour later, the passengers were still mostly voluble but definitely more courageous. Lanston had long since acquired two more volunteers, and leaned against an empty section of shelves to rest. The rush had eased

and the press dispersed when he had deliberately overlooked the tendency of the more ambitious souls to carry bottles to various parts of the lounge.

He saw Kurian look in from the forward exit. After a moment's hesitation, the pilot came toward him. Lanston stepped over to the door and slid it open far enough to admit the officer's thick shoulders.

"What's doing?" he asked.

Kurian examined him searchingly.

"I'm getting up a little group to check some of the emergency jets. Want to go along?"

"Why me?" asked Lanston. "Are volunteers that hard to get?"

"As a matter of fact . . . yes," growled Kurian. "I'll say frankly that I don't especially like the way you got yourself pumped aboard here, and I still owe you for this eye I'm getting, but you at least don't seem to scare easy."

"Well . . . since you put it that way," said Lanston.

One glance over his shoulder assured him that the situation was well under control. He reached a long arm under the counter and stepped back to the wing where Kurian stood.

"Here," he said, holding up a bottle of Centaurian whiskey that he had marked down for his own. "A swallow of this will assist the takeoff."

He expected Kurian to head for the nearby entrance to the second section, but the pilot took him to an upper deck by way of Section Four, which was occupied mainly by fuel and supply compartments.

"We have the airtight doors closed forward of Section Three," Kurian told him.

"Think it's dangerous up there?"

Kurian looked over his shoulder to meet Lanston's eye.

"Don't spread this around," he said, "but half of the forward section has broken off. Air is leaking out of Two like money through a drunk's fingers. I'm afraid even the small rockets may be affected."

Lanston digested this in silence, wishing he had stayed on Corsha.

Or at least on the Saphire, he told himself.

"Ah, here they are!" exclaimed a voice as Kurian slid aside a door and led Lanston into the anteroom to one of the ship's airlocks.

Captain Stower looked again, and added, "Is *that* the only one you could find, Kurian?"

"It seemed like a good idea, sir," answered the pilot. "Here's a spacesuit for you, Lanston."

Lanston discarded Boley's shoes and pulled on a pair of heavy socks someone offered him. He recognized among the group the assistant pilot, Monteforte, and the grizzled spaceman who had rescued him from the *Saphire*. There were four others preparing to go outside, and several assisting them. No one looked particularly happy.

The spacesuited men began to pass through the airlock before Lanston was ready. Monteforte stayed to help, and they were the last ones outside.

The cold beauty of the stars merely accentuated the black emptiness. Despite the heating coils in his suit,

Lanston shivered. The grav field was weak out here.

He trailed Monteforte toward the nose, where a group of the others were gathered with lights and cables. Someone thrust the end on one of these into Lanston's gauntlet and pointed at a ring sunk in the hull. He shrugged to himself and looped the cable through, securing it with a couple of hitches.

What do they think they're going to do—fly a jet on a half-inch cable like a kite? he wondered.

By the time he had finished, an emergency rocket was being maneuvered out of the space left by a retracting section of the hull. A space-suited figure that moved like Kurian crawled into the port that had been left open. The end of the cable was passed to him, and then several of the men lifted the small vessel clear of the hull. Monteforte pressed his helmet to Lanston's.

"I'd like a picture of that," his voice penetrated the metal. "Even if it isn't as hard as it looks."

The emergency rocket slowly drifted a few yards away. Kurian disappeared inside for a few minutes. When he came out to crouch in the exit with one hand on the cable, he seemed to be watching the timer on the chest of his suit.

"What's he going to do?" Lanston asked, leaning over to touch helmets with Monteforte.

"See if it stands up under the rockets."

Jets suddenly flared at nose and tail of the small ship. They were obviously minimum strength and matched to neutralize each other.

"How does she look?" Kurian's voice sounded over the suit radios.

"Not bad," answered somebody. "Satisfied? Or do you want to try a stronger—*Look out!*"

The nose of the jet puffed out in a flare of silent brightness. Immediately, the remaining part began to pick up speed forward.

Warned by the shouts, Kurian leaped clear of the exit port where he had waited. He shot over their heads, gripping the end of the cable.

Lanston, watching the pilot, did not see the subsequent explosion that shattered the emergency jet before it had traveled a hundred yards.

What did catch his eye was the anchored end of Kurian's cable cutting through the ring in the hull like a wire slicer through cheese.

"Hey!" he yelled as he nudged Monteforte. "Get hold of something!"

He snatched up one of the cables lying lightly on the hull and shoved the end at the assistant pilot. Then he leaped after Kurian with the other end clenched in his gauntlet.

The pilot had been partially halted by the waning resistance of the crumbling metal, but he was drifting away into the void. Lanston shot up alongside him, hoping that *something* would anchor Monteforte. He grabbed at Kurian's leg.

Something felt wrong with the contact. The next instant a whining noise filled his ears and the tiny motors of his air circulator began to labor.

"Chee-rist!" he muttered. "I've sprung a goddam' leak!"

Half paralyzed with the horror of it, he had forgotten leaving his radio on. Kurian thrashed about and grabbed the cable from him.

"Haul us in fast!" the pilot roared. "He's got a leak."

Lanston felt the acceleration as they were yanked down to the hull. He tried to clamp his gauntlet over the spot on his forearm from which air was escaping, but he could not see the tiny hole. He feared to squeeze, lest the metal of the arm section crumble.

Then they were down, and space-suited figures rushed him from one handhold to another and into the air-lock. One tumbled in with him and tore open the inner door as soon as the closing of the outer permitted the minimum of air pressure to build up. Air puffed into the chamber, and Lanston staggered out into the anteroom where willing hands helped pry him out of the suit.

"What happened out there?" demanded Captain Stower.

Monteforte, who had come through behind the ex trader from Corsha and opened his helmet, told him while Lanston caught his breath. He saw the crewmen looking at him and wondered if his face were white.

I'm not in the market for another scare like that, he thought.

He weighed the chances of getting anywhere in the emergency rockets, and decided that they were decidedly dim.

"Captain Stower," he said. "May I make a suggestion."

"Go ahead," said Stower heavily. "I'm running out of them myself."

"Much as I hate to face the fact," Lanston declared slowly, "I'm afraid this bottle of yours is coming apart at the seams."

"Also between the seams," Stower sighed. "Get to it!"

"And trusting the emergency rockets is taking a big chance. But if you could spin the *Nova* enough to brake with the main drive—"

"Yes?"

"Maybe," said Lanston, "we could pick up *my* ship."

"Oh, nuts!" growled the other with a tone of disgusted finality.

Crewmen nearby who had paused to listen muttered profane disappointment. Lanston held Stower back by the sleeve.

"Wait a minute!" he insisted. "It's worth thinking about. You didn't have interstellar speed yet. We're not even twenty million miles out from Corsha. The *Saphire* is good for that far—with a little luck!"

"I thought she was about to blow up when we took you off!"

"Oh . . . that," mumbled Lanston. "I . . . er . . . might have exaggerated just a little."

He saw Stower begin to scowl as he figured it out.

"At least, she isn't crumbling apart!" he added.

"Well . . ." Stower hesitated. "I'll see what Kurian says about the emergency jets. You have one point—there isn't anywhere else we can get to in time."

Lanston found a bench under a rack of spacesuits and kicked some odds and ends off it so he could stretch out. When Monteforte re-entered the airlock, he thought for a few seconds of offering to go along. Then he changed his mind.

I took MY chance for this watch, he thought. *Let some of these other heroes take the next.*

Twenty minutes later, another man was brought in with a faulty suit. The waiting crewman swarmed over him, peeling off the spacesuit.

"Pass the word for Doc Bergman!" ordered Stower. "And hand me one of those slings for a tourniquet!"

Lanston took one look at the foot between the bodies of two crewmen It was grotesquely puffed and red with blood from ruptured arteries. Freezing had occurred too late.

He sat up on the bench, but there was nothing for him to do. The injured man was presently carried away, and Stower turned to one of the pair that had brought him inside.

"What's the story out there?" he demanded.

"Mr. Kurian decided the rockets based in Two and Three aren't much good. The ones aft, around the rocket room, don't seem so bad yet."

Captain Stower glanced thoughtfully at Lanston.

Another half hour passed, and the men outside began to come in by twos and threes. Kurian was last. As he was being helped out of his suit, he confirmed the advance report.

"There are four I'd say were safe, and another pair good in a tight choice," he said wearily.

Stower beckoned Lanston over.

"Tell him your bright scheme!" he said.

Lanston explained. To his surprise, Kurian raised no objection. Lanston realized that the pilot was worried. He decided that when Kurian was scared, it was time for everyone else to start running.

"I set my course to the same curve you used," he said to clinch the argument.

Stower darted him a sharp look, and Lanston had to explain *that* part of his escapade. Kurian and his superior eyed each other.

"It *might* be done," said the pilot.

"We're doing it!" decided Captain Stower. "It's the only chance. You get a few minutes' rest while I talk with McLeod in the rocket room!"

He bustled out of the compartment. Kurian glanced at the crewmen straightening up and turned to Lanston

"Think there's any chance of sneaking a bottle or two from the bar?"

"If there's one left, I'll sure try," Lanston replied. "Shall I bring some knockout drops, or do you really think we'll make it?"

"We have a chance," said Kurian soberly. "It's lucky that it seems to be working from the nose aft. I don't know why . . . the coils extend all the way through the ship. Maybe the field draws more power at a distance from the generators aft, so the effects were noticeable in the control room first."

Lanston left him slumped on the bench and wound his way back through the next section to the lounge.

He found the latter compartment somewhat cleared by the retirement of those who had become excessively cheered. Julie and Wilson Boley were not to be seen. Lanston frowned.

Of his eager assistants, only the white-mustached gentleman still stood leaning cheerfully on the bar. He was now slightly rumpled, but greeted Lanston with a wicked wink.

"Come slumming, boy?"

"In among my betters, Pop. Is there anything left?"

He wished he had gone for his jacket while there was time. Or his shoes, for that matter. He examined the pair of untouched bottles held out for his inspection.

"Got anything to wrap them in, Pop?"

The other glanced around vaguely.

"Wouldn't want to see the last survivors hi-jacked, boy," he said. "How about this fellow's jacket?"

Lanston craned his neck to see the floor behind the bar. Two inert bodies, one of them clad in a borrowed white jacket, snored gently beneath empty shelves.

"What size shoes would you say he wears?"

On his return trip, he hurried because announcements of an impending change of course were beginning to flow over the public address system. One of the testing gang intercepted him in an upper corridor before he reached the airlock anteroom.

"Mr. Kurian said to tell you we all moved in here."

Lanston followed the man into what had evidently been a storage compartment. When he unwrapped the white coat from his burden, his welcome was assured.

"We came back here because the Old Man sent word he's going to clear Section Three," explained Kurian. "I don't know where he's going to put everybody. I s'pose I'll have to go help in a minute."

Captain Stower, however, managed without calling upon his chief pilot. In the uninsulated compartment, they clearly heard the rumble of a steering rocket. For several minutes, Lanston was confused as to "up" and "down" despite the continued functioning of artificial gravity.

Finally, Kurian said, "They've got her around. I'd better go. Lanston, have you got your identification light data for the *Saphire?*"

"In my jacket," said the trader glumly. "I left that in the Galactic Suite!"

"Never mind. I'll have one of the boys climb in a suit and fetch it. You'd better see if you can catch forty winks while we brake and calculate the probable time of interception. We'll have our work cut out for us, sighting your ship with only the instruments of the emergency rockets."

Lanston accepted a place atop a heap of empty plastic bags after Kurian left. For a while, he listened to Monteforte discussing the situa-

tion with the crewmen; but the assistant pilot and a couple of the others who were rocketmen were presently summoned away.

Then the deceleration began, causing a general shifting about of the odds and ends the men were using for seats.

"The hell with this," grunted one of them finally. "I'm gonna look for a better place. Wish I was a rocketman and had a bunk back here instead of in the part that's fading away."

In a few minutes, however, he returned to report disgustedly that passengers were clogging the corridors and other storage compartments as Captain Stower enforced his safety measures against the chance of a leak in Section Three. Lanston rolled over and tried to go to sleep.

He wondered briefly if he stood any chance of finding Julie Knapp in the confusion. He decided regretfully that Wilson Boley was doubtless looking out for her. The rumble of the main rockets, now pointed in the direction of flight, continued.

He remembered later waking up when a dozen or so of the passengers were added to the company around him. Then, still later, a hand shook his shoulder roughly.

"Somebody to see ya, Cap," announced one of the spacemen.

Lanston sat up, rubbing a hand over the sprouting stubble on his chin and shaking his head. The compartment was snugly filled with people who seemed to be doing little but staring at their hands. Julie Knapp stood in the doorway, beckoning.

Lanston rose and stepped cautiously over sundry sleepers. He followed Julie outside. She led him a few yards to a nearly empty side corridor. Lanston thought it must be a runway for inspecting the walls of the fuel tanks.

"Hungry?" asked the girl, holding up a napkin-wrapped package.

"Well . . . now that you mention it—"

"I got Higgins to give me a couple of sandwiches when he was passing out what he called supper. Billyboy . . . ?"

"Yunh?" Lanston grunted encouragingly around a mouthful.

"They say you really *are* a captain with a spaceship, and that we might transfer to her. Is that right?"

"Mostly," he admitted. "Depends on whether Kurian and the others can spot her in space. We were traveling on the same curve, but . . . there's a lot of room out there."

Julie sniffed and dabbed at her eyes with a forefinger.

"I *knew* you'd save us, ever since you came and got me in my stateroom when the gravity was off! I guess you thought I was pretty awful."

"Now, why would I think that?" demanded Lanston.

"Well, I laughed at you when . . . when—"

"Would have laughed myself. It *was* funny . . . I suppose."

"And then Willy went and left me because he said he wanted to be in

the corridor leading to the escape rockets, and I didn't know what to do except try to find you."

Lanston frowned.

"By the way," he asked as casually as he could manage, "who is Boley? An uncle, or something like that?"

Julie looked at him wide-eyed.

"Oh, no! I never met him till we both got aboard on Klajarrok—that was two planets before Corsha. But he kept following me around . . . and . . . and I guess I just got used to him."

Lanston grinned to himself. That did not strike him as being much of a habit to break

Just as he dropped a hand gently upon her shoulder in preparation for ending the lingering pause in the most satisfactory way, he heard his name being called in the outer passage. Julie slipped her arms about his waist.

"*Bill-y!* I'll bet they've found your ship!"

"*Did they have to—!* I mean . . . I sure hope so. I have to go see, I'm afraid."

Julie stood on her toes and kissed him on the mouth. Lanston decided that Kurian could shoot over in a rocket to examine the *Saphire,* but Julie drew away at last.

"They'll be looking for you," she murmured. "But you won't forget me, will you?"

"Don't worry about that!" said Lanston, trying to calm his racing pulse. "When we transfer, I'll see that you and I go together."

He forced himself to leave her there and elbowed his way along the outer corridor until he caught up with the steward who was paging him. It was Higgins.

"They want to confer with you in the main rocket room, Captain Lanston," said Higgins, his blue eyes popping with glad cordiality.

Owning a spaceship really gives a man swank, thought the trader smugly. *I must try never to be without one.*

He found the ship's officers gathered about a desk in the engineer's section of the rocket room, where Captain Stower had set up headquarters after evacuating Section Three.

"For a while, I thought we'd be driven right into the tubes," he told Lanston. "The two forward sections are so much junk by now. We'll just have time to abandon—with luck!"

"You picked up the *Saphire?*" asked Lanston eagerly.

"Mr. Kurian spotted her just as we were about to give up."

Newman moved aside as Stower spoke, and Lanston saw Kurian slumped on a stool beside a panel of rocket room gauges. They were all tired and unshaven, but the pilot seemed exhausted. Lanston squirmed inside as he noted the swelling about Kurian's eye. Then the other looked up at him and grinned, teeth very white against his tanned face.

"You're coming with me in the first rocket," he told Lanston. "We'll need you to save groping around when we get inside. She'll be about three miles away by the time we're ready."

The party was organized with a minimum of confusion. Higgins and the tow-headed Newman, who had volunteered to rig a collapsible air-tube on the *Saphire's* entrance port, and Lanston were issued spacesuits. Kurian settled himself in the little control bay of the rocket, and the nearest dozen passengers were jammed in behind. Julie Knapp sat wide-eyed behind the pilot, occasionally throwing a smile to Lanston at his post by the tiny airlock.

IT seemed to take hours, during which they were once more weightless, to reach the old ship. Lanston sweated inside his suit and fidgeted nervously when Kurian began an endless series of petty, jiggling blips on his steering rocket.

"What did he do, get lost?" he whispered to Newman.

"Not *him!*" murmured the other. "Better get your helmet screwed on; we must be there and he's trying to lay us in close to her airlock. Here—check mine, will you?"

Lanston checked him and Higgins, and was checked. Newman tapped him on the shoulder and they entered the airlock one at a time.

Lanston was the first one through. He stared at the looming hull only a few yards away, and seconded Newman's faith in Kurian's skill. A magnetic grapple shot across and clung.

Never thought I'd be so glad to see YOU again, he thought.

Higgins erupted from the airlock with a bulky package. When Newman joined them, the three of them fitted together the metal attachments that would clamp to the airlock ports and extended the plastic tube.

"Your honor, Captain," said Newman over his suit radio.

He pointed to the *Saphire* and thrust the end of the tube toward Lanston as Higgins finished clamping the opposite end down.

Looks awfully thin, the trader thought. *Glad I'm going over in a suit!*

With a boost from Newman, he floated across to the old rocket's airlock, which opened without difficulty. The others leaped and relieved him of the tube. They began to clamp it to the port from the outside as soon as Lanston got in.

The first thing he did was to turn on more lights. He regretted the power wasted because of the ones he had left burning when he abandoned, but the darkness of space had made him appreciative of such luxuries. Glancing about before making the jump, he had been utterly unable to spot the *Nova.* The two or three flashes from other emergency rockets on the way had merely intensified the lonely feeling.

He shucked out of his spacesuit after a quick check of the air pressure, and ran for the ladder to the storage decks. After the grav system of the *Nova,* it felt queer to experience the shift of weight every time he passed a deck on his way down toward the jets.

The passengers were already coming through by the time Lanston had

thrown open two of the holds. He buttonholed a capable-looking youth to put in charge and told him where he might tap the water supply.

"You'll have to make yourselves comfortable the best you can," he concluded. "Julie! You come with me to the control room. I want to make radio contact with the others."

He led the way up two ladders to the deck just under the control room.

"This is about the best cabin," he said, showing her the entrance. "Make yourself at home!"

"Is *this* your spaceship?" asked Julie, eyeing the rust spots on the bulkheads with distaste.

"Well . . . she's not fancy, but she goes—I hope!"

By the time he made radio contact, Kurian had already pulled away and headed back for the *Nova*. Until the completion of the complex operation, Lanston remained a sort of traffic director. All the *Nova* pilots were hard at work. He grew hoarse from talking them into position, but was too busy to worry about where the people were going.

"You mean it's the *last?*" he cried as Monteforte reported he had Captain Stower with him.

They let him off for long enough to shave and wash up while there was still water to spare, but insisted that he be in the control room when they spun the ship to brake and get up speed toward Corsha.

"Frankly," Stower put it, "I'd be afraid to touch anything in this spare parts bin!"

Someone found a blanket to fold in a corner of the deck, and Lanston lay on it when they let him. Every so often, one of the pilots would inquire why this gauge indicated zero temperature in the rocket room, or whether it was safe to trust the automatic air-analyzer. Lanston did the best he could, but sensed that they doubted the sanity of anyone who blasted into space in a rattletrap like the *Saphire*.

But she's still in better shape than their fancy tub, he consoled himself. *She might even make it back to Corsha.*

As the hours wore on, he kept hoping but had to admit that things were getting uncomfortable. After one quick visit to his old cabin, which he found occupied by six men and women, he avoided asking how the passengers and crewmen were making out. Like sardines, he could see for himself. He wondered where Julie had taken herself and worried about her disappointment at the condition of the *Saphire*.

Can't blame her, he reflected. *I was glad enough to leave when I thought the Nova was safer.*

"The air's getting a little thick, isn't it?" he asked Kurian as the *Nova* pilots changed "watches" much later.

"We're trying to stretch it," muttered the pilot. "Do you realize we've been aboard nearly a day?"

Lanston raised an eyebrow and glanced about the dingy control room.

"Holding up pretty well, isn't she?" he inquired smugly.

Kurian groaned. "Whatever made

you think you could take this antique into space and get away with it?" he demanded.

"Had no choice," Lanston shrugged. "My last credit went for this hull. If she doesn't last back to Corsha, I'm bankrupt as well as dead!"

"Ummm," murmured Kurian. "Well, we might get out alive. The Old Man is going to radio Corsha for ships to meet us."

Lanston considered this. It occurred to him that there was now leisure to worry about his plight in case he did not die. He would land upon Corsha under a cloud, to put it charitably.

I'd better see Stower before he radios, he thought.

The planet swelled from a bright point to a crescent to a half-lighted globe. They were lucky in that their approach was from north of the system plane.

"I'd hate to have to dodge a meteorite group in this," was the way Stower put it.

He agreed good-naturedly to Lanston's request, however; and when they at long last approached Corsha's atmosphere, he called the trader to listen in as he contacted the ships hastily sent up to take off the passengers.

"No, we'll have to use your emergency craft. We abandoned ours. . . . Yes, we still have the air-tube connected. . .Who—Lanston? They agree to drop all possible charges? Good! It's the least we could do for him; there would have been a major tragedy if he hadn't . . . er . . . offered the use of his ship . . ."

There was more, about the order in which the rescuing ships would approach, but Lanston was satisfied.

That should hold Axelrod a while, he gloated, and went down to the next deck to search out Julie.

"The little eyeful with the bosom and the long hair?" a male passenger answered his query. "I saw her down on the next deck with old Moneybags Boley."

The entrance to the main airlock, Lanston thought. *Can't she wait to get off?*

He found them sitting on the deck near the airlock, with a score of others. Boley's back was against the bulkhead and Julie rested coyly on his shoulder

"In a hurry to leave?" he asked Julie, but he stared Boley in the eye.

The man took it upon himself to answer.

"You surely don't expect Miss Knapp to remain on this rusty contraption a moment longer than necessary!"

Evidently irked at having to look up to Lanston, he rose. Julie also got to her feet. A moment later, several others did the same when two spacemen, completely suited, pushed their way to the airlock and entered it.

"The ships are here," murmured several voices.

"I'm sorry if you misunderstood Miss Knapp's concern for your safety—" Boley began once more.

"Let her tell me about that!" said

Lanston brusquely.

"All right," snapped the girl. "I will! Just because I brought you a sandwich once, you needn't get ideas! I don't like the way you put on airs, pretending you were captain of a spaceship when all you owned was *this* smelly wreck!"

"But, Julie! How about when you—?"

"How about never!"

"See here, Lanston!" blustered Boley. "I can't permit you to annoy Miss Knapp any further. She needs the protection of someone like myself, with resources sufficient to take care of her properly."

"Take an eclipse!" Lanston told him impatiently. "Julie, listen to me! I—"

"You penniless, planet-hopping tramp!" she shrilled at him. "Willy, get this redheaded gawk away from me before we miss the rescue rocket!"

Lanston gaped, experiencing a hollow sensation amidships. As he stared, forgetting Boley, a fist swished out of nowhere to thud on his left cheekbone.

He staggered, more in surprise than in hurt, and Julie completed his overthrow by kicking him heartily in the shin. Lanston's feet went from under him. His skull rang against the bulkhead on the way down. He remembered thinking vaguely how much healthier that bulkhead sounded than the one on the *Nova*.

The airlock was opened and a stranger in a fresh uniform stepped out.

"All right, folks!" he called. "Who's for the first trip? Don't rush, lady—there are four other ships waiting!"

Lanston shook his head and hauled himself to his feet. He attracted a few curious glances, but most of the interest was directed to lining up for the departure. Captain Stower pushed his way forward from the foot of the ladder to confer with the Corshan officer, and remained to spread words of calm and confidence among those who crowded around the airlock.

Boley and Julie were among the first to leave. Lanston felt his eye tenderly and slunk up the ladder to his old room, where he sat upon the now empty bunk to add up the score.

You bonehead! he reproached himself. *When you think back, can you remember one kind word out of her except when she thought she needed you?*

Kurian found him studying the mouse under his eye about half an hour later. Lanston listened to the jubilant report that everyone had been gotten off, but did not turn from his sour contemplation of the mirror.

"What happened to you?" asked Kurian.

Lanston told him.

"I don't hold it against the fat slob," he said. "He just doesn't know any better. But it kind of hurts to find out you're a nit-witted ass!"

"Oh, come on, now!" laughed Kurian. "With that little girl, there's been many another shorn lamb, I'll bet, and there'll be more in the future. You ready to go?"

"I think I'll try to land her," said Lanston.

"*What?*"

"Got nothing to lose. If I can sell her for scrap, maybe I can eat for a while."

Footsteps sounded in the corridor. Captain Stower appeared.

"What's the hold-up, Kurian?" he demanded. "Let's go!"

"He's going to ride her down," said the pilot.

Behind Stower, Lanston saw the equally surprised faces of Newman and Monteforte. Stower flushed.

"He's crazy!" he exploded. "Does he know how much fuel is left."

"There's just enough," said Kurian slowly. "*If* it's used carefully."

"But he isn't an experienced pilot!"

"I am, though. And I believe I'll bear a hand here. The ship's all he has in the world, sir. We owe him something."

Lanston thought for a moment that they would drag Kurian off by force and return for him. Then he saw their expressions change before Kurian's level stare. Stower shook his head sadly.

"They all soften between the ears in the end," he muttered. "Well, good luck, Bill!"

Newman nodded wordlessly and Monteforte shook hands with both of them.

"I'd like to stay and help out," he said, "but I'd rather live!"

They marched to the ladder. In a few brief moments, their voices died away and the door of the airlock changed.

"Let's get up to the control room," said Kurian soberly.

"Maybe we'd better not," said Lanston, feeling guilty at having dragged the other into a wild scheme. "Can you really handle her?"

"Don't worry, Bill! I haven't been piloting for ten years without learning some tricks they don't need on those luxury rockets. We'll get her down or I'll owe you for another ship!"

He began to work the tail around to hit the atmosphere first.

"Of course," he admitted, "I don't guarantee to pick the spot more than ten seconds ahead of time! I'll try for the Capital City spaceport, though."

"Any acre of jungle will suit me fine!" Lanston breathed.

Two hundred miles up, they reached noticeable air and Kurian sent Lanston down to the rocket room to watch for danger signs. The *Saphire* went into a braking orbit.

Fifty miles more of drop, and Lanston began to be bothered by the slant of the deck despite the gravity plates. He also became conscious of strange groans and vibrations about him.

One hundred miles up, something outside gave way. The old *Saphire* went into a noticeable wobble as the thunder of the main rocket battery turned slightly ragged.

"A tube blew, I think!" Lanston screamed over the intercom.

"Better get up here," answered Kurian.

"What's the trouble?"

"Nothing—yet! But it's the best place to watch the landing from. Not so much weight to fall on your head if . . . if we come down a trifle fast."

Lanston gave up watching the inaccurate gauges and ran for the ladder. He was nearly shaken loose by the increasing wobble and, on the next level, by a blast of air funneled in through some rent in the hull; but he fought upward, clawing for handholds on the rungs and trying to remember how to pray. . . .

OVER the capital city of the planet Corsha the shadows were lengthening as the colonial world placidly spun its other face to its yellowish primary.

Consul Axelrod pursed his lips as he sat behind his painfully trim desk and stared casually at the spinning hand on the face of the electric wall clock. A casual observer might have thought him engrossed in some weighty diplomatic problem. As a matter of fact, he was considering two of them.

He had just solved one by deciding that he might with a good chance of success invite his blonde receptionist to dinner that night at his private residence. It did not seem like time yet for another trinket or one of the Corshan pearls he had been presenting her.

Then, there was the matter of the *Nova*.

Naturally, the consulate must do something for Stower and his people, he pondered. *A dinner, or some such welcome to celebrate escaping a catastrophe that would have seriously injured the reputation of—*

He struggled briefly with the mask of his inner self, but failed to prevent its slipping a trifle. Was it the reputation of Terra that gave him concern? Or that of the spaceline in which he happened to have a modest investment?

"Well, of course, the reputation of *every* Terran organization affects that of the mother planet," he murmured smugly.

Which brings up the problem of that young puppy, Lanston, he recalled. *There's that agreement, yes; but it will never do for me to appear to condone his skipping out. I wish I knew how he got on the right side of Stower—*

His intercom buzzed, and he heard steps outside his door. Hastily, Axelrod straightened primly in his chair and slipped on what he considered an expression of dignified competence. He believed firmly in keeping up appearances at the office.

The door swung back abruptly, but the tramp of feet was low-heeled and anything but petite. The recipient of the inquiring, fishy stare that had resulted from Axelrod's being alerted was Bill Lanston.

"Hello, Mr. Axelrod!" he greeted the consul challengingly.

Axelrod's other eyebrow crept upward as he viewed Lanston's dishevelled air and the yellow-green swelling under his left eye. His lips twisted

coldly before he realized that another man had followed Lanston into the office.

"See here, Lanston!" he said. "It will do you no good to . . . uh . . . influence the spaceline officials to bring you over here in another attempt to worm you passage money out of the consulate funds."

He paused as he got a better look at the second man. A sudden doubt rose in his mind.

"Er . . . that *is* why you are here, I presume?" he queried.

He felt a vague twinge of anxiety, seeing that the fellow looked almost as disreputable as Lanston. His brown hair was rumpled and the neck of his sweaty shirt hung open to expose a brawny chest. This second man also seemed to have a puffy discoloration around *his* eye.

"That *is* why we're here," Lanston agreed firmly.

"We?" asked Axelrod weakly, turning back to the lanky redhead.

"We. Both of us. Allow me to introduce John Kurian."

"How do," said the second man.

Axelrod eyed him warily.

"Mr. Kurian, being a space pilot," said Lanston, "assured me that under the provisions applying to distressed spacemen—entirely apart from the awards we may demand for the use of our rocket, the *Saphire*, in the *Nova* rescue—"

Axelrod's pale face took on an unhealthy flush. He half rose behind his meticulously arranged desk as he stabbed a forefinger at a pushbutton.

"You-you-you—" he choked.

He gave up the attempt to find a satisfying term whose use would not undermine his diplomatic dignity. With his other hand, he pointed shakily toward the door. Lanston clucked his tongue.

"Maybe we'd better give him a day to think it over, Johnny," he remarked. "I'm sure Mr. Axelrod will do something for us when he learns that we're now neighbors of his."

"N neighbors?" gasped Axelrod in horror.

"Accidentally so," replied Lanston, smiling brightly at him. "You see, in the haste of trying to set down before that old bottle popped and scattered us like rain, Mr. Kurian was unable to aim carefully. We hoped to miss the city here, but—"

"But . . . ?" whispered Axelrod, almost pleadingly.

"But the people told us the hill the *Saphire* is balanced on is part of your garden. Your house is all right—until the next high wind! Unfortunately, we can't afford to pay for having the ship moved."

"I . . . uh . . . believe we may be able to do something for you," Axelrod sighed. "Terra, you know, likes to take care of her own."

"Uh-huh," said Lanston. "When they take care of themselves! Come on, Johnny!"

THE END

Lost Continents

By L. Sprague de Camp

No. 4

The Hunting of the Cognate*

In some green island of the sea,
Where now the shadowy coral grows
In pride and pomp and empery
The courts of old Atlantis rose.

In many a glittering house of glass
The Atlanteans wandered there;
The paleness of their faces was
*Like ivory, so pale they were.***
Masefield

ATLANTISM ranges from the doctrines of the occultists at one extreme, through various pseudo-scientific or semi-scientific speculations, to the efforts of *bona fide* historians and scientists to find a basis for Plato's story at the other. While the occultists, with their Atlantean wizards and bisexual Lemurians, offer much more colorful accounts than Plato, they are hardly to be taken seriously by reasonable people. Arguing with them is rather like wrestling with the giant jellyfish *Cyanea:* the substance is too soft and slippery to grasp, and there is not even a brain to stun.

I therefore turn from them with some relief to the Atlantists who claim to be scientific in their approach. For, if one claims the dignity of the mantle of science, one must expect to be judged by its criteria, just as the Amerind who claimed the status of a warrior by braiding his hair in a scalp-lock accepted the risk that another brave

*Slightly condensed from *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, & Literature,* by L. Sprague de Camp; Phila.: Prime Press, 1952; copr 1952 by L. Sprague de Camp.

**From John Masefield: *Story of a Roundhouse,* copyright 1912 by the Macmillan Co and used with their permission.

would take up both the implied challenge and the scalp that went with it.

Outside the magical fraternities, Atlantism is a fairly small but durable cult. There once flourished, for instance, an Atlantean Research Society with headquarters in New Jersey, and in the 1930's a similar Danish group issued Atlantean stamps and money. About the same time somebody approached the late George W. Vaillant, a leading expert on the Aztecs, for help in organizing an expedition to seek Atlantis at the bottom of the sea with a diving-bell. And at the moment an Atlantis Research Centre is issuing publications in London.

One of the most active of such groups, the French *Société d'études atlantéens,* was formed in 1926 with Roger Dévigne as president and Paul le Cour as secretary. The club soon broke into a conservative faction under Dévigne who tried to keep the proceedings scientific, and a radical faction under le Cour, who seceded, set up his own *Amis d'Atlantis,* and picked quarrels with non Atlantist French scholars like the archeologist Reinach. For some years le Cour published *Atlantis,* a bi-monthly magazine largely devoted to the occult. His group went on *pique-niques atlantéens* talking a strange jargon of their own and wearing Atlantist emblems in their buttonholes, and finally broke up a meeting of their rivals at the Sorbonne in 1927 by throwing tear-gas bombs into a discussion of ancient Corsica.

Atlantism is active enough to support the publication of books that appear every few years exploiting and expanding the hypotheses of Donnelly and his kind. In a recent and typical example, Braghine's *Shadow of Atlantis,* the author starts off appropriately with a frontispiece that is a photograph of a pair of forged antiques, passed off as Atlantean relics. Then the author, though he repudiates the occult inspirations of the Theosophists, goes on to make a fantastic series of flat and ridiculous misstatements of fact: that all Mayan statues have beards, that the Breton language is unconnected with other European tongues, that the extinct aurochs or European wild ox was the same as the American bison, that camels were never native to North America, that the remains of elephants have not been found in America north of Florida, that there were no lions in Classical Greece, that the Otomis speak ancient Japanese, that the biographer of the famous wizard Apollonios of Tyana was "Theophrastes," that the great pyramids of Gizeh and Teohtihuacán were built many thousands of years B.C. . . . and so on; mistakes of the sort that would be cleared up by a little selected reading and a visit to a couple of good museums. You believe Colonel Braghine at your peril.

Much of the book is devoted to the alleged cryptic inscriptions and the lost Atlantean cities of Brazil. Now, the treasure-cities of the Brazilian wilds have been one of the

leading will-o'-the-wisps of speculative paleology ever since the *conquistadores* wandered the length and breadth of this vast land seeking in vain for El Dorado. The British Atlantist Wilkins wrote a whole book on these supposed relics of a higher civilization. Half a century ago the Krupps of Essen spent a half-million dollars of their steel fortune on an expedition to the Matto Grosso to look for such a city.

Then in 1925 a retired British army officer, Lt.-Col. Percy H. Fawcett, set out upon a similar errand with his twenty-year-old son and another young man named Rimell and vanished. Fawcett, an experienced explorer and a forceful character with a mystical turn of mind thought that the Brazilian jungle concealed the ruins either of Atlantis itself or of one of its daughter cities. Several other parties went in search of Fawcett without success during the following decade. But his disappearance remained a mystery until in 1951 Orlando Vilas Boas, an Indian agent of the Brazilian government coaxed the Calapalo Indians of the upper Xingú basin (pronounced "shing-*goo*") into admitting that they had killed Fawcett and his companions because they did not like the way Fawcett had treated them.

More recently a French gold-prospector, Apollinaire Frot, spread seductive rumors of his archeological discoveries in Brazil, declaring with typical pseudo-scientific fervor that the results of his investigations were so striking that he feared to publish them. He died with his findings unpublished, for like sea-serpents, psychic phenomena, and Schliemann's owl-headed vase, the Brazilian Atlantis seems to withdraw and vanish at the approach of qualified scientific investigation.

But to return to Atlantist books: An even odder specimen in this garden of queer literary flowers was the *Atlantis: die Urheimat der Arier (Atlantis: the Original Home of the Aryans,* 1922) of Karl Georg Zschaetzsch, who asserted that the original Aryans, blond and virtuous vegetarians and teetotalers, were the people of Atlantis. Like Carli before him and Velikovsky after, Zschaetzsch (pronounced "chech") claimed that Atlantis was destroyed by the collision of the earth with a comet. The only survivors of the sinking were Wotan, his daughter, and his pregnant sister, who took refuge in a cave among the roots of a giant tree beside a cold geyser. Wotan's sister died in childbirth and a she-wolf suckled her infant. The blood of these noble Nordics became mixed with that of the non-Aryans of the mainland, and their degenerate descendants resorted to meat-eating and to the loathsome practice of fermenting liquors, invented by a non-Aryan girl witch named Heid (like Wotan, from Norse mythology).

By "racial memory" the author "proved" that these events underlay the legends of the Christmas star, the world-ash Yggdrasil and the spring of Mimir beside it, Romulus and Remus, and almost any other myths

you care to mention—thus Eve's Edenic apple was "really" Heid's applejack. The Greeks were an Atlantean colony and Zeus one of their early chiefs All of which went to prove that Herr Zschaetzsch was himself a descendant of Zeus, as you can easily see from his name!

This sort of fantastry, so common in Atlantism, explains why the dispositions of historians and scientists tend to come unglued at the mere mention of Atlantis. Part of their phobia is derived from their experiences in giving popular lectures, at the end of which somebody is sure to stand up and start an argument on Atlantis, waving a copy of Churchward and asserting that it must be so because it says so right here in print.

HOWEVER, if it is possible to study such emotionally loaded subjects as sex and religion in a detached and scientific manner, we should be able to investigate the Atlantis question in the same spirit.

You can treat the problem of Atlantis in any of several ways. You can, like the occultists, swallow Plato's story whole and expand it by inspired extrapolation. Or you can take it as mainly true, but try to rationalize it by leaving out the supernatural elements. Or you can search for a real ancient culture corresponding to Plato's confederacy, though not necessarily on a sunken island. Or you can investigate the possibility of Atlantic islands and land-bridges from the point of view of geology or biology. Or, finally, you can study Plato's dialogues simply as fiction, and look for their sources as you look for the inspirations of any famous piece of fiction.

Since few people nowadays would believe in the god Poseidon and his ten sons, some rationalization is necessary in any treatment of Atlantis. Donnelly provides an example of the rationalist group. But once you start altering the story in the interests of plausibility or drama there is no telling where you will stop. As the acute T. H. Martin said: "many scholars, embarking upon the search for Atlantis with a more or less heavy cargo of erudition, but with no compass other than their imagination and caprice, have voyaged at random. And where have they arrived? In Africa, in America, in Australia, in Spitsbergen, in Sweden, in Sardinia, in Palestine, in Athens, in Persia, and in Ceylon, they say."

As a result Atlantis has been identified with all sorts of places and its submersion with all sorts of catastrophes. It didn't happen when Plato said it did, they say, but thousands of years earlier or later. It wasn't in the Atlantic, but in the Arctic, or South Africa, or New Zealand. It didn't sink, but was merely damaged by a hurricane; Poseidon was not a god but a mortal king. Its civilization was not of the Classical type described by Plato, but either a superscientific machine-age civilization or a high-grade stone-age culture like that of the early Mayas. And so on.

Now, while some of these points

may be well taken, you cannot change all the details of Plato's story and still claim to have Plato's story. That is like saying the legendary King Arthur is "really" Queen Cleopatra; all you have to do is to change Cleopatra's sex, nationality, period, temperament, moral character, and other details and the resemblance becomes obvious.

Moreover, while lost civilizations and submerged lands are perhaps possible, there is no compelling reason for connecting them with Plato, who after all knew nothing about what happened in the Miocene Period and had never heard of New Zealand. While it is hard to determine the exact limits of the knowledge of an antique sage like Plato, who is no longer here to be quizzed, we can be as sure of the foregoing as we can be of anything.

And Plato might, you know, have hit upon a description of real events, without knowing what had actually happened, by sheer chance. It has often happened in the history of human knowledge, as when Demokritos hit upon the theories of the atom and of the evolution of life by inspired guess. In fact the French anthropologists Mortillet and Verneau took just that view of Atlantis: while (contrary to most geologists) they believed in a North Atlantic land-bridge persisting down to the Pleistocene, they did not think this land-bridge had anything to do with Plato's story.

Therefore, let us beware of enthusiastic rationalizers of Plato's tales and other ancient myths, since such people, starting with the same story, come up with scores of different interpretations, all of which can obviously not be true at the same time.

Non-occult Atlantist theories fall roughly into two groups: those that call for a great catastrophe, a subsidence or flooding, and those that do not. Let us take the former group first.

In 1803 Bory de Saint-Vincent published his *Essai sur les îles fortunées et l'antique Atlantide*, wherein he set forth the conventional Atlantis story. Like Donnelly later, he assumed that Atlantis was much more than Plato said—the original home of civilization, in fact. There had been two subsidences. The first, the result of volcanic action in the Mediterranean, reduce the island so that the survivors had to become aggressive imperialists to find living-space. After their defeat by the Athenians, the rest of their continent sank also, leaving only the islands of the Canaries, Maderias, and Azores as remnants.

In a plausible-looking map Saint-Vincent showed Atlantis in its heyday. It was located immediately west of the bulging part of West Africa, where the Sahara and the Sudan run down to the ocean; in fact almost touching the African coast at Cape Bojador and again at Cape Verde. The sea inclosed between Africa and Atlantis and these two straits he called the "Lac Tritonide," that is, Lake Tritonis, which plays a part in the story of the Argonauts and in

Diodoros's account of the African Amazons. The northeast corner of Atlantis he labelled "Hesperide ou Pays des Atlantes"; the southeast, "Pays des Gorgones"; and the coastal region of Atlantis between "Pays des Amazones." The present Canary Islands mark the site of the original Atlas range, where lay the Gardens of the Hesperides, the snow-topped volcanic peak of Teyde on the island of Tenerife being the original Mount Atlas; a plausible idea, for the steaming 12,000-foot Pico de Teyde does answer the Classical descriptions of Mount Atlas much better than do the mountains of Morocco.

Saint-Vincent got some of his ideas from a French botanist, J. P. de Tournefort, who about a century before suggested that Atlantis had been washed away by the outrush of water from the Mediterranean when, as a result of an earthquake, the level of that sea rose above that of the Atlantic, and the outflowing water carved the Isthmus of Gibraltar into a strait. Tournefort in turn derived this idea from Strato of Lampsakos, who back in Hellenistic times asserted that the Black Sea had become connected with the Mediterranean by overflowing into it and the Mediterranean had done likewise with the Atlantic.

Others such as the naturalist Buffon, a contemporary of Saint-Vincent, thought that Atlantis had been washed away by water flowing in the opposite direction, from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean, which theretofore had been mostly dry land. Modern geology tends to support this view. During the last advance of Pleistocene ice, say some geologists, the Mediterranean was a great low plain with a pair of large lakes separated by the ridge connecting Italy and Sicily with Africa. During the warm interglacial periods apelike men hunted pigmy elephants and hippopotami in Sicily. With the final melting of the ice-caps the ocean rose until, about 15,000 years ago, it broke through the Isthmus of Gibraltar and filled the Mediterranean basin to its present level, forcing thousands of men and millions of animals to flee. A catastrophe? The origin of Plato's story, with the Mediterranean Valley playing the rôle of Atlantis? Suggested but not proved.

As the solution to the Atlantis problem, the theory has objections. The geologists do not agree: Déperet, for instance, thinks the Ibero-African connection broke down before the Pleistocene. The Gibraltar region is built of limestone and shale, and while these rocks are not the most resistant, they are much more so than mere soil. Therefore the isthmus would not give way all at once like the St. Francis dam in Los Angeles, but would erode slowly as the salt river from the ocean cut its way into the rock. And when you compare the size of the tub with that of the faucet, you can see that filling up the Mediterranean must have taken many years. Moreover, if the sea did flood the basin thus, the dispossessed people were not Plato's cultivated Atlanteans, but skinclad Neolithic

hunters, and there is no evidence that preliterate men can hand down a truthful account of a historical event by oral tradition alone for 10,000 years, or even a tenth of that period.

Other suggestions have called for even more drastic map-changes. For instance in 1926 Claudius Roux argued that in post-glacial times most of North Africa was under the sea, and the mountains of Morocco and Algeria constituted a peninsula on which Atlantis throve. Eventually the land rose, or the sea fell, and the seas and lagoons dried up leaving the present deserts and salt marshes.

Roux tried to buttress his theory by citing the Glozel finds, a group of pebbles and clay tablets inscribed with marks vaguely like writing found on a farm near Vichy, France in 1926 in association with paleolithic objects. Then it transpired that H. C. Rogers, a professional faker of antiques, had made the Glozel objects and planted them on the farm. Before the hoax was exposed it had fooled even the distinguished Reinach, and had led to eccentric theories of European prehistory, a libel suit and a fine riot at a meeting of the College of France.

The American engineer R. A. Fessenden offered an even more spectacular theory of map-changes; like the eighteenth-century French Atlantist Delisle de Sales before him, he located Atlantis in the Caucasus. De Sales said the Atlanteans migrated from the Caucasus, then one of the few islands in the world-covering ocean, to the true Atlantis in the middle of the Mediterranean, including much of Italy and North Africa.

Fessenden began with sweeping assertions to the effect that "Primitive man was very literal minded," with no imagination, which is not necessarily so. He tried to show that when Greek myths spoke of events in the "Mediterranean" they really meant the Black Sea, and that the "Atlantic Ocean" of the myths was really a great shallow sea, the Asiatic Mediterranean or Sarmatian Ocean, which once covered most of Russia. This body of water Fessenden called the "Ocean of Atlantis."

Fessenden argued that he observed a curious gap in the Greek myths: they said nothing about the western half of the Mediterranean. His explanation was that a whole block of place-names had been displaced from regions east of the Black Sea, where they belonged, to the Atlantic region. Consider, for instance, that the name "Iberia" was applied both to the Spanish peninsula and to a region in the Caucasus. Mankind, he concluded, evolved in the Caucasus, built a high civilization there which was wrecked by a great flood, and then spread in all directions. Subsequently the land rose and the Sarmatian Sea dried up, leaving the Black, Caspian, and Aral Seas as remnants. While his argument was based on dubious geology, bad mythology, impossible linguistics, and Aryan-race nonsense, it was plausible enough for Wells to give it a friendly nod in his celebrated *Outline of History*.

The Orientalist Joseph Karst exploited the idea of an eastern Atlantis in an even more spectacular manner, arguing for two Atlantides, one in northwest Africa and one in the Arabian Sea. There was, he said, an even earlier center of cultural radiation in central Asia, which Karst, like Fessenden, believed to have been submerged down almost to historic times. The eastern Atlantis is Homer's Ogygia; it is also the land of Kangha in the Iranian poet Firdausi's *Book of Kings*, and the Peshotanu who rules Kangha is Plato's Poseidon.

Karst based his arguments mainly on linguistic grounds: fantastic linguistics that classified languages into nonsensical groups like "Uralo-Basque" which included such unrelated tongues as Dakota, Chinese, and English. An "Ibero-Ethiopian race" invented civilization in Ogygia-Atlantis, which sent forth three waves of migrants before it sank altogether: the first including the Chinese, the Sumerians, and the Otomis; the second, the Mayas and Kichés of Central America; the third, the Aztecs and the peoples of the Caucasus.

The latest version of the eastern-Atlantis theory is that of the tame scientists of the U.S.S.R. Having in recent years claimed, with magnificent disregard of fact, all the world's inventions and scientific discoveries for Russia, they have at last arrogated Atlantis for that country. It existed, they say, in the area now covered by the Caspian Sea.

Other Atlantists have advanced theories, like those of Karst, of two Atlantides, one or both of which has been submerged. Thus Duvillé proposed two centers of Atlantean civilization, one on the conventional Atlantic island and one in northeast Africa, on the site of the present state of Ethiopia, while René-Maurice Gattefossé claimed that civilization was born on an Arctic continent which he called by the old name of "Hyperborea." When this land foundered, said Gattefossé, its people spread to the North Atlantic Atlantis and to other continents, erecting megalithic monuments like that of Stonehenge as they went. The Crô-Magnon men of Paleolithic Europe (who, like the Mayas, are nearly always dragged into Atlantist arguments) were pure Hyperboreans. Afterwards the Atlanteans developed the so-called Cyclopean style of architecture, involving the use of large irregular blocks without mortar, found in Bronze Age ruins in Europe.

According to Gattefossé, the "War of the Titans" of Greek myth is a recollection of periodic changes in the earth's axis, causing world-wide alterations in climates and coastlines. Zeus, Poseidon, Atlas, and Hesperos were all Atlantean kings. Under Poseidon the Atlanteans learned to domesticate animals, and fought the Gorgons and Amazons who had a matriarchal government of which traces are still found among their descendants the Berbers. The author tries to trace the migrations of all branches of the human stem by skull-shapes, assuming all long-headed peo-

ple to be closely related, and likewise all broad-headed folk. This is absurd, since the cranial index is only one of many characteristics to be considered in classifying people, and used by itself leads to such curious results as lumping the Swedes, Eskimos, and Hottentots together.

The idea of a far northern Atlantis had been advanced by Rudbeck in the seventeenth century and by Bailly in the eighteenth. Hermann Wirth more recently put his sunken continent in the Arctic, calling it "Thule" after the island Pytheas heard of in his travels. Like Churchward, Wirth thought he had the key to the profoundly psychological sacred symbolism of primitive man so that by tracing the symbols of primitives the world over he could reconstruct the pre-history of man. For instance a pair of circles one above the other, connected by a short line, represents the year. Wirth believed that the last survivors of his arctic civilization were the now extinct Sadlermiut Eskimos, descendants of the Thuleans who flourished between 25,000 and 12,000 B.C., contemporary with the Crô-Magnon men; and that their culture, while high, was non-metallic. They spread to Europe, Asia, and the Americas, splitting into the present racial types as they went, and even migrating as far as New Zealand.

WHILE most Atlantists are vague as to *why* continents sink, one of them has more than accounted for the phenomenon: Hanns Hörbiger, author of the Cosmic Ice Theory, the *Welteislehre* or WEL as it came to be known. Hörbiger was an Austrian inventor, a gadgeteer who bragged that he never calculated anything. When people doubted him he would shout:

"Instead of trusting me you trust equations! How long will you need to learn that mathematics is valueless and deceptive?"

Hörbiger told his followers that as a boy, while looking through a telescope at the moon and the planets, he had suddenly realized that they were made of ice. Furthermore, a dream revealed to him that the sun's gravity extends out only three times as far as Neptune. As a young engineer the sight of waterlogged soil exploding with puffs of steam as molten iron ran over it gave him the final clue for building a cosmos almost as colorful as Mme. Blavatsky's and even more alarming.

The universe, it seems, is a sort of cosmic steam-engine. Interstellar space is full of rarefied hydrogen and water-vapor. (True to a small extent.) When a small star, moving through this damp mixture, loses its heat, it picks up ice. When a larger star pulls it into itself it stays buried in the large star, a vast ball of ice, for millions of years while the ice melts. Finally the small star turns to steam, the resulting explosion throwing pieces of star-material into space. These condense into planets while the oxygen of the giant star, also blown out, unites with the hydrogen

of space to make a ring of ice-particles ("bolides") outside the planets. The Milky Way is not, as astronomers assert, the farther stars of our galaxy, but the bolides of our Solar System.

As the hydrogen of space slows them up, these bodies all spiral inwards towards the sun. Because the smaller particles are retarded the most they spiral in most rapidly passing the larger ones. Thus as the ice-blocks of the Milky Way fall towards the sun, most of them are picked up by the gravitational fields of the outer planets, wherefore the latter and even our own moon have acquired ice-coats hundreds of miles thick.

When an ice-block reaches the sun it causes another explosion which fills the space around the sun with fine ice-particles. The inner planets Venus and Mercury, moving through these, have also become sheathed in ice; the earth is luckily just far enough from the sun to avoid icing. Large planets catch smaller ones spiralling past them and make moons of them, eventually drawing them into themselves.

Both the capture of a satellite and its subsequent fall to the surface of a planet impose great stresses upon the planet. Its gravitational pull causes floods and earthquakes until the moon settles into a stable orbit. Then all is serene until the satellite, retarded by the hydrogen of space, nears its primary, whereupon its gravity draws the oceans into a belt or bulge around the equator, drowning the equatorial regions but leaving the polar lands high and dry.

Finally when the satellite approaches within a few thousand miles, gravitational forces break it up. The fragments shower down on earth; the oceans, released from the satellite's pull, flow back towards the poles, exposing tropical lands and submerging polar territories. All human catastrophe-myths can be fitted into this scheme somewhere, be they the Biblical Flood, Atlantis, the Revelation of St. John or the Norse Ragnarök

The earth has had at least six moons before the present one, captured and destroyed in the Algonkian, Archeozoic, Cambrian, Devonian, Permian, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic Eras. Since man was civilized in the Cenozoic or Tertiary Era, he remembers the fall of the Cenozoic moon, whose approach submerged all the tropical lands save a few highlands like Peru and Ethiopia 250,000 years ago. The capture of the present moon, the ex planet Luna, submerged Atlantis and Lemuria. When Ezekiel speaks of "Tyre" or the author of *Revelation* of "Babylon," they mean Atlantis. The breakup and fall of Luna will probably end life on earth.

Hörbiger sold this doctrine to a German schoolteacher and amateur astronomer named Fauth, who in 1913 published Hörbiger's book *Glazial-Kosmogonie*. Although World War I interrupted the progress of the cult, Hörbiger appeared after the war with a long white beard and a publicity-machine that flooded Eu-

rope with books, pamphlets, and threatening letters. Soon his followers numbered millions, the more fanatical of whom interrupted meetings of learned societies with yells of.

"Out with astronomical orthodoxy! Give us Hörbiger!"

Hörbiger wrote one correspondent: "Either you believe in me and learn or you must be treated as an enemy." Another Austrian, Hans Bellamy, was converted to Horbigerism by recollecting that as a boy he had suffered a recurrent nightmare about an oversized exploding moon, and popularized the Cosmic Ice Doctrine in English.

Although Hörbiger died in 1931, his movement continued active for years. With the rise of Hitler the Hörbigerites identified themselves with the racial philosophy of the new rulers: "Our Nordic ancestors grew strong in ice and snow; belief in the World Ice is consequently the natural heritage of Nordic Man." But the Nazis who bought so many queer ideas, remained unresponsive to this one.

Unfortunately for Hörbiger's theory the planets are not made of ice (though some probably do have icecoats); if they were they would look and act differently. (When a critic pointed out that Saturn's density is *less* than that of ice Horbiger muttered something about a "gravitational shadow," which he never explained.) Nor is the Milky Way composed of "bolides," as telescopes have long since proved; nor do stars and planets work the way he said. The moon is receding from us instead of approaching. In fact, calculations show that all Hörbiger's assertions are flatly impossible in the light of all present knowledge. But then, he always claimed one could prove nothing by equations.

An even madder theory of periodical catastrophes was brought out more recently by Immanuel Velikovsky, a Russo-Israeli physician and amateur cosmogonist whose publishers stirred up an extraordinary hoopla in 1950 to sell his book. The theory is somewhat like those put forth in the eighteenth century by the speculative mythologist Gian Rinaldo Carli, who thought that Atlantis had sunk when a comet struck it in 4000 B.C., and in the early twentieth century by Zschaetzsch as related *supra*.

According to Velikovsky, many centuries ago, as a result of a planetary collision, Jupiter erupted and spat out a comet. This comet, travelling in an eccentric orbit, skimmed the earth about 1600 or 1500 B.C., close enough to cause a worldwide catastrophe with earthquakes, tidal waves, and all the rest. This grazing contact is remembered as the opening of the Red Sea in *Exodus* and other mythological convulsions.

Fifty-two years later this comet grazed the earth again, which debacle is remembered as Joshua's feat of commanding the sun to stand still. These approaches of the comet not only stopped the earth's rotation but started it spinning again in the opposite direction, changed the position

of its poles and their inclination to the ecliptic, and changed the earth's orbit so that the year was lengthened from 360 to 365 days. The gaseous hydrocarbons of the comet's tail showered down, partly as petroleum (whence modern oil-wells) and partly as the sugary *manna* eaten by the Hebrews in Sinai.

Having lost most of its tail, the comet went on to graze Mars which, jostled out of its course, also made destructively close approaches to the earth in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. before settling into its present orbit. The comet meanwhile settled down to become—the planet Venus!

To buttress this startling proposition Velikovsky has dug up mountains of ancient lore: the Babylonian 360-day calendar; Hindu references to the "four planets"; and an immense mass of quotations from the myths of the Hebrews, Egyptians, Norse, Aztecs, and others. When they don't fit he gives them the Prokroustes treatment: As Plato's sinking of Atlantis is dated 9000 years before Solon's trip to Egypt (about 590 B.C.) Velikovsky fits the yarn into his framework by knocking a zero off Plato's figure and dunking Atlantis 900 years before Solon.

Why, if these events happened in historic times, don't the records describe them in clear language? Because, says Velikovsky, the human race suffered "collective amnesia." Mankind's subconscious was so terrified by these occurrences that it decided to forget all about them!

Despite the impressive build-up, however, Velikovsky neither establishes a case nor accounts for the success of the Copernicus-Newton-Einstein picture of the cosmos which he undertook to supersede. Some of his mythological references are wrong (for instance he uses the Brasseur "translation" of the Troano Codex); the rest merely demonstrate once again that the corpus of recorded myth is so vast that you can find mythological allusions to back up any cosmological speculation you please. The Babylonians left clear records of observations of Venus 5000 years ago, behaving just as it does now. References to a "four-planet system" probably mean that early astronomers overlooked Mercury, not a conspicuous object even at maximum elongation. And the 360-day year was simply a case of priestly inaccuracy, gradually corrected as knowledge grew.

Moreover the theory is ridiculous from the point of view of physics and mechanics. Comets are not planets and do not evolve into planets; instead they are loose aggregations of meteors with total masses less than a millionth that of the earth. Such a mass—about that of an ordinary mountain—could perhaps devastate several counties or a small state if it struck, but could not appreciably affect the earth's orbit, rotation, inclination, or other components of movement. If a mass big enough to reverse the earth's rotation hit the earth, the energy of the impact would completely melt both bodies; if it

didn't hit it wouldn't change the earth's rotation enough to matter. And the gas of which a comet's tail is composed is so attenuated that if the tail of a good-sized comet were compressed to the density of iron, I could put the whole thing in my briefcase!

As for "collective amnesia," that is like saying you're being followed by a little green man whom you can't see because he vanishes every time you turn your head to look for him. You can't very well disprove such an assertion, but neither are you obliged to take it seriously.

YOU may wonder if I have been selecting samples from the lunatic fringe of Atlantism in order to discredit all Atlantist theories. I assure you I have not, because the Hörbigers and Churchwards constitute the main body of Atlantism, while the "fringe" consists of the few sane and sober writers on the subject.

Among these is (or was) the Scottish mythologist Lewis Spence, who once edited an *Atlantis Quarterly* which ran for five issues before succumbing to monetary malnutrition. Between thirty and forty years ago Spence published a number of popular books on the myths of Mexico Egypt, and other lands, wherein he showed sound skepticism towards the more eccentric conceptions of human prehistory, like those of Le Plongeon.

Spence's *The Problem of Atlantis* (1924) while less critically acute than his earlier books, is still about the best pro-Atlantis work published to date. The author undertook to prove:

"(1) That a great continent formerly occupied the whole or major portion of the North Atlantic region, and a considerable portion of its southern basin. Of early geological origin, it must, in the course of successive ages, have experienced many changes in contour and mass, probably undergoing frequent submergence and emergence.

"(2) That in the Miocene (Late Tertiary) times it still retained its continental character, but towards the end of that period it began to disintegrate, owing to successive volcanic and other causes.

"(3) That this disintegration resulted in the formation of greater and lesser insular masses. Two of these, considerably larger in area than any of the others, were situated (a) at a relatively short distance from the entrance to the Mediterranean; and (b) in the region of the present West India Islands. These may respectively be called Atlantis and Antillia. Communication between them was possible by an insular chain.

"(4) That these two island-continents and the connecting chain of islands persisted until late Pleistocene times, at which epoch (about 25,000 years ago, or the beginning of the post-glacial epoch) Atlantis seems to have experienced further disintegration. Final disaster appears to have overtaken Atlantis about 10,000 B.C. Antillia, on the other hand,

MAP OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, showing Atlantis and Antillia (according to the theories of Lewis Spence) and the Sargasso Sea.

seems to have survived until a much more recent period, and still persists fragmentally in the Antillean group, or West Indian Islands."

Spence rationalizes away most of the historically or scientifically improbable parts of Plato's account. Thus, he says, Atlantis need not have disappeared in twenty-four hours of quakes and storms, but as a result of a series of earthquakes over many years. Plato's Atheno-Atlantean war is probably a fiction based upon some local Greek war. Plato's metallurgy is unsound, metals not having come into use until thousands of years after the disappearance of Atlantis. Still, even if the Atlanteans were a stone-age people and not the source of all civilization, they had a considerable culture.

For examples of this culture Spence refers to the Crô-Magnon race of stone-age Europe, stalwart cavemen whose remains are found mostly in southwestern France and north-

ern Spain. The Crô-Magnon people, named for the village near which the French archeologist Lartet first found their relics, were remarkable in two respects. First, they belonged to a physically impressive type of the White Race; the men averaged over six feet, with big brains, massive chins, wide cheek-bones, beak noses, beetling brows, and high foreheads, so that they looked a little like Norwegians and a little like Blackfoot Indians. Their skulls showed the unusual combination of a very long cranium with a very broad face. Second, they drew and painted astonishingly realistic pictures of game animals on the walls of their caves, and carved them on their tools and utensils; the cave-pictures being a kind of sympathetic magic to assure success in hunting.

During the final retreat of the glaciers about 25,000 years ago, the Crô-Magnon men replaced, probably in no gentle manner, their brutish Neanderthal predecessors. The Crô-Magnon period is divided into three stages, based upon types of archeological remains: the Aurgnacian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian. Most of the Crô-Magnon art belongs to the first and last of these. Other races invaded Europe during Crô-Magnon times also: a Negroid people in the Riviera and a Mongoloid People in Central Europe. After the Magdalenian stage, the Azilian Tardenoisian peoples overran Europe: crude artists but makers of bows and fine stone fishhooks, who, again probably for magical reasons, painted multitudes of pebbles with spots, stripes, and simple patterns.

From their distribution around the shores of the Bay of Biscay, Spence inferred that the Crô-Magnons must have come from the west, especially since their remains had not been found farther east. He thought there were three waves of Atlantean invasion: the Aurignacian, the Magdalenian, and the Azilian and cited respectable authorities like Henry Fairfield Osborn for the supposition that both the unique Basque language and the remarkable Berberspeaking stone-age Gaunches, who inhabited the Canaries when Spain annexed them in the fifteenth century, were relics of the Crô-Magnons. (Some anthropologists in fact claim to see traces of Crô-Magnon blood in the people of the Dordogne Valley of France, who are tallish, rugged-looking, and brown-skinned, with abundant black hair and the peculiar Crô-Magnon skull-form.)

The Azilians, said Spence, arrived about 10,000 years ago, about the time given by Plato for the sinking of Atlantis. Significantly they were buried facing west. They probably founded the civilizations of Egypt and Crete, the later Iberians being their descendants. The type of town planning they developed in Atlantis was reflected in the later plans of Carthage and Knossos. The Osirian religion of Egypt was developed by them, as is shown by its numerous parallels in Western European folklore; for instance Druidism and the story of King Arthur contain Osirian

elements. Keltic legends of unattainable islands and submerged cities all point to Atlantis.

Like most Atlantists, Spence derived the Mayan culture from Atlantis. He got around the usual chronological difficulty (the fact that the Mayan civilization only appeared a little before the Christian Era) by supposing that the westbound Atlantean refugees stopped over in Antillia for some thousands of years, and only moved on to Yucatán when the latter island sank in its turn. He corroborates this migration by various Amerind myths, such as the Aztec legend of Quetzalcoatl (pronounced "kayt-sahl-*kwatl*"), the ruddy, bearded foreigner who was said to have led a band of black-robed civilizers about Mexico spreading enlightenment until a pair of sorcerers fed him a homesickness-potion that sent him hurrying across the sea on a raft of snakes. Spence thought Mayan culture must have evolved elsewhere because "when the Maya civilization first manifests itself upon Central American soil, it does so not in any simple or elementary manner, but as a full-blown culture, with a well-defined art, architecture, religion, and system of hieroglyphic writing."

Spence also cited geologists like Gregory, Scharff, Hill, Neumayr, Suess, and Termier in support of the theory of an Atlantic continent or a transatlantic land-bridge lasting till comparatively recent times—until the later Pleistocene anyway. And he mentioned as significant the curious habit of the lemmings of Norway in swimming out to sea in great masses, as if looking for a land that is no longer there; failing to find it they circle aimlessly until they drown.

In subsequent books, *Atlantis in America, The History of Atlantis,* and *The Problem of Lemuria,* Spence added details to his theories, which however are by no means so strong as they look at first sight. Furthermore Spence's own critical sense seems to have declined with the years, until he has ended up publishing books like *Will Europe Follow Atlantis?* (1942) arguing that God sank Atlantis for its sins and will do likewise to Europe if it doesn't reform.

But to go back to Spence's earlier and more lucid period, he talked a great deal about "a world-intuition regarding the existence of a transatlantic continent," which "has its origin in folk-memory"; "we are dealing with a great world-memory, of which Plato's story is merely one of the broken and distorted fragments. . . ." The only trouble with this talk of world intuitions and folk-memories is that there is no reason to suppose that such things exist. A memory is simply an electrical phenomenon in somebody's brain, and there is no known way by which this memory can get into that person's germ-cells and thence into the brains of his descendants. He must either tell it or write it, and memories that must be passed on orally have a way of shrivelling into unrecognizable figments of folklore in a few genera-

tions.

Spence's ideas on scientific method remind us a little of those of the occultists: "Inspirational methods, indeed, will be found to be those of the Archaeology of the Future. The Tape-Measure School, dull and full of the credulity of incredulity, is doomed." "Analogy is the instrument of inspiration, and if wielded truly, is capable of extraordinary results." "The day is passing when mere weight of evidence alone, unsupported by considerations which result from inspiration or insight, can be accepted of the world. . . ." However, science has achieved its results by these very "tape-measure" methods, while those who have studied questions like Atlantis with "inspiration or insight" have come up with hundreds of conflicting hypotheses.

Spence also relies heavily upon myth and tradition: ". . . all tradition has a basis of fact"; ". . . tradition, if carefully employed, is a document of equal sanction with anything in black letter. . . ." "There is no myth which has not its background of reality." Perhaps Spence, like Lewis Carroll's Bellman, believes that "what I tell you three times is true." He even considers legends more reliable evidence of past changes in the earth's surface than geology, despite the obvious fact that to change a story he has heard is one of the easiest things for a man to do, while the rocks stay much the same from age to age.

Even if we confine ourselves to Spence's facts, they turn out less impressive than they seem at first. For one thing, Crô-Magnon culture has now been found in the East—in Palestine. Furthermore, despite all these assertions that the cultures of Egypt, Yucatán, and Peru sprang into existence suddenly without a slow transition from primitive culture, modern archeology has disclosed the gradual evolution of all these cultures from more primitive levels. You can, for instance, trace the growth of Egyptian culture from the neolithic Merimda people, who wore animal skins, lived in mud houses, and farmed in a crude manner, to the highly civilized men of the Fourth Dynasty. You can in your mind's eye watch them substitute clay pots for stone pots, add handles to their pots, learn to bake their pots in kilns, and lastly, in the early dynasties, adopt the potter's wheel and the practice of glazing.

Such wrong ideas about the sudden appearance of cultures arise because the relics of the later stages of a past culture tend to be more numerous than those of its early stages. As the later people often made more, bigger, and more durable houses and artifacts than their ancestors, and as these later things have not been lying around so long, the more recent relics are less likely to have been destroyed by fire, rust, termites, or vandals. For instance, if you tried to reconstruct the history of iron armor from the exhibits in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York alone, you might conclude that iron armor came into use suddenly in the fourteenth century in a highly devel-

oped state. But as we know from art and history, iron armor was made many centuries before 1300; the earlier pieces, however, have almost all rusted away to nothing or were turned in to the smiths for scrap.

Another reason is that people who finance archeological expeditions have an understandable weakness for showy results, and hence tend to concentrate on highly developed cultures at the expense of the more primitive.

Moreover Spence's pro-Atlantis geologists are either pre-1900 and hopelessly out of date, or belong to a minute minority. The Norwegian lemmings do not migrate in the way he says; they become starved by overpopulation, start off in any direction, swim rivers and, when they meet the sea, mistake it for another river to their undoing. The Swedish lemmings try to swim the Baltic in the opposite direction. The Crô-Magnons did not, as Spence says, have a civilized culture with domesticated horses and cows; they had a very primitive culture like that of the Australian blackfellows, and hunted wild cows and horses. The feathered war bonnet of the Plains Indians was not derived from the Crô-Magnons by way of the Mayas, but was devised by Indians of the Sioux group from whom it spread to the neighboring tribes . . . and so on. As for the Osirian relationships of King Arthur, this legendary king is wrapped in such a fog of ignorance and speculation that to try to connect him either with Osiris or with Atlantis is too explain one unknown by another—*ignotus per ignotum*.

Even the mythology in which Spence is supposed to be an expert is not above criticism. To support the theory of a Central Pacific Lemuria, he makes much of Polynesian flood-legends, though according to his fellow-mythographer Andersen deluge legends are exceedingly rare in Polynesia. Spence quotes as an example the Hawaiian tale of the ark in which Nuu and his wife and three sons escaped the Flood, without noticing that Nuu is obviously Noah and the tale is of Christian missionary origin

SO much for the leading Atlantists, occult and secular, and their doctrines. While I have pointed out a few mistakes in these beliefs in passing, there are a lot of themes that come up again and again in Atlantism—the rise and sinking of continents, the origin of the Mayas, the nature of myths, and the relationships of languages—that cannot be gotten rid of so easily. What does science really say on these and related subjects? Be careful; nothing is easier than to say that "science says" thus-and-so. Although the Atlantists have exploited this phrase to the limit, it often turns out that "science" has said nothing of the sort; perhaps one scientist once said something of the kind, but even he might be wrong.

To begin with, we cannot accept Plato's tale as unvarnished truth; who believes the romance of Poseidon

and Kleitor True, Atlantists rationalize Poseidon into a mortal king of Atlantis. However, Poseidon is not merely one of Plato's characters, but a leading god of the Greek Pantheon. If you rationalize his cohabitation with Kleito you should also rationalize his persecution of Odysseus, his creation of a spring on the Akropolis of Athens by striking a rock with his trident, and all the other myths about him

Moreover there is no record of Plato's prehistoric Athenian Empire. Had this great state existed, its remains could hardly have been overlooked in a country so thoroughly picked over by archeologists as Greece. True, Greece contains prehistoric ruins at Mykenai and Tiryns, but these "cylcopean" structures belong to the period immediately following the fall of Crete, roughly 1400 to 1000 B.C.

Atlantists also assert that many inscriptions in Old-World languages have been found in the Americas, and hint that in some mysterious way a Phoenician inscription in Brazil corroborates Atlantis. However, these "Phoenician inscriptions" usually turn out to be something other than was supposed. Dighton Rock in Massachusetts had its scratches attributed to Phoenicians, Druids, Persians, Trojans, Hebrews, Libyans, Romans, Norsemen, Welshmen, Chinese, and Atlanteans until Prof. E. B. Delabarre with floodlights and a camera disclosed, under the carvings of Indians and modern campers, the name of Miguel Corte-Real, a Portuguese explorer who sailed for Newfoundland in 1502 and never returned. The Grave Creek Mound stone from West Virginia was analyzed as Etruscan, Runic, Phoenician, Old British, Keltiberic, and Greek, and when solved by Andrew Price in 1930 proved to read "Bill Stump's Stone, October 14th, 1828"—probably having been inspired by the story of the finding of a similar stone in Dicken's *Pickwick Papers* published just before that date.

As for the South American rock-carvings in which Braghine, Frot, and others have professed to see Phoenician, Hebrew, and other Old World writing, these are mostly crude pictures of men and animals which the Indians have carved, sometimes for magical reasons and sometimes for amusement. We know this because some of them still carve them.

Atlantists are much given to linguistic arguments to prove that the Mayas or some other New-World people have close relatives in the Old World. The method is the same as that of those who try to show that the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel are the Irish, the Aztecs, or the Burmese. They find a word in one language, and a word with a similar sound and meaning in another language, and conclude that they are applying the science of philology. In this manner they have "proved" that Aztec is Indo-European; that Chinese is related to Egyptian; that Algonkian is related to Latin; that Kiche is related to Berber; that Carib is related to Hebrew, and so on until they have

proved that virtually every language is related to every other.

In a sense they probably are; that is, they are all descended from the grunts of the same Pliocene ape-man. But when we say languages are "related" we mean that they were separated so recently that they still resemble each other, as the examples listed above do not.

You see, the study of linguistic relationships is much more complicated than simply finding a pair of similar words. By the laws of chance there are almost sure to be a few apparent cognates (that is, genetically related words like English *water* and German *Wasser*) in any pair of languages, related or not. Thus "ten" is *dix* in French and *disi* in Hottentot; "search" is *examine* in English and *eggamen* in Tuareg; "time" is *hour* in Szechuanese; and so on *ad infinitum*. The reason for such pseudo-cognates is that most languages have but twenty to fifty phonemes (significant sound-units) and at least several thousand words, so that some such resemblances are inevitable by sheer luck.

To find real linguistic relationships, you must not merely take isolated words, but consider all the words in certain classes, such as numbers, colors, family relationships like "father," parts of the body like "head," natural categories like "water," and so on. Let us do a little experiment along these lines to shed light on the Atlantist assertion that Maya is half Greek and half Hebrew. These are the first ten numerals in several New-World and Old-World languages:

English	*Greek*	*Hebrew*	*Chinese*	*Japanese*	*Mayan*	*Otomi*
one	hen	'echadh	i (or yi)	hitotsu	hun	da
two	dyo	shenayim	er	futatsu	ca	yojo
three	tria	shelōshāh	san	mitsu	ox	tiu
four	tettara	'arbā'āh	sz	yotsu	can	coojo
five	pente	chamishshāh	u (or wu)	itsutsu	ho	gu.lta
six	hex	shishshāh	lu (or liu)	mutsu	uac	dato
seven	hepta	shibe āh	tsi (or chi)	nanatsu	uuc	yoto
eight	oktō	shemōnch	ba	yatsu	uaxac	giato
nine	ennea	tish'āh	giu	kokonotsu	bolon	guito
ten	deka	esārāh	shī	tō	lahun	detdta

English and Greek are obviously related, but no other pair of languages on the table shows any apparent resemblance. This is not final "proof," of course, but a mere sample to show that the languages in question are not so alike as Atlantists often claim. For a thorough analysis of linguistic relations you need a much longer list of comparative words, and also a study of phonology, inflection, and syntax.

When the Amerind languages are so studied, Eskimo proves to be

slightly related to the languages of Eastern Siberia, which is natural enough. Otherwise, however, the Amerind languages show a wide diversity among themselves, and *no* clear relationship to any Old-World tongues Although some of them have grammatical features faintly reminiscent of the Ural-Altaic languages like Turkish, which spread out from Central Asia, many of them display strange and unique characteristics; for instance some like Nootka do not distinguish between nouns and verbs. All of which implies that the Amerinds have been separated from the Old World for thousands of years, and that during most of that time they were split into little isolated groups of hunters and food-gatherers. Such a society cannot support the density of population necessary for civilization, as they would soon sweep the country bare of edible plants and animals, and be forced to split up to avoid starvation.

Such considerations never bother the Atlantists, however, who seize upon any chance resemblance of names or other words to prove their case. By their methods I could, for instance, "prove" that the Amerinds are the descendants of colonies from ancient Greece: I could derive the Croatan Indians from Crotona in Italy, the Cherokees from Kerkyra, the Chilkats from Chalkis, the Mandans from Mantinea, and the Aleuts from Aleusis. Why not?

As for the actual origin of the Amerinds in general and the Mayas in particular—but that requires a chapter or two to itself.

(February issue: Number 5)

MISS AN ISSUE?

We still have copies of the following issues available at 35c each or 25c each as part of your subscription:

Vol. 3, No. 3 — May 1951
Vol. 3, No. 4 — June-July 1951
Vol. 3, No. 5 — September 1951
Vol. 3, No. 6 — October 1951
Vol. 3, No. 7 — December 1951
Vol. 4, No. 1 — January 1952
Vol. 4, No. 2 — March 1952
Vol. 4, No. 3 — April 1952
Vol. 4, No. 4 — June 1952
Vol. 4, No. 5 — July 1952
Vol. 4, No. 6 — August 1952
Vol. 4, No. 7 — October 1952

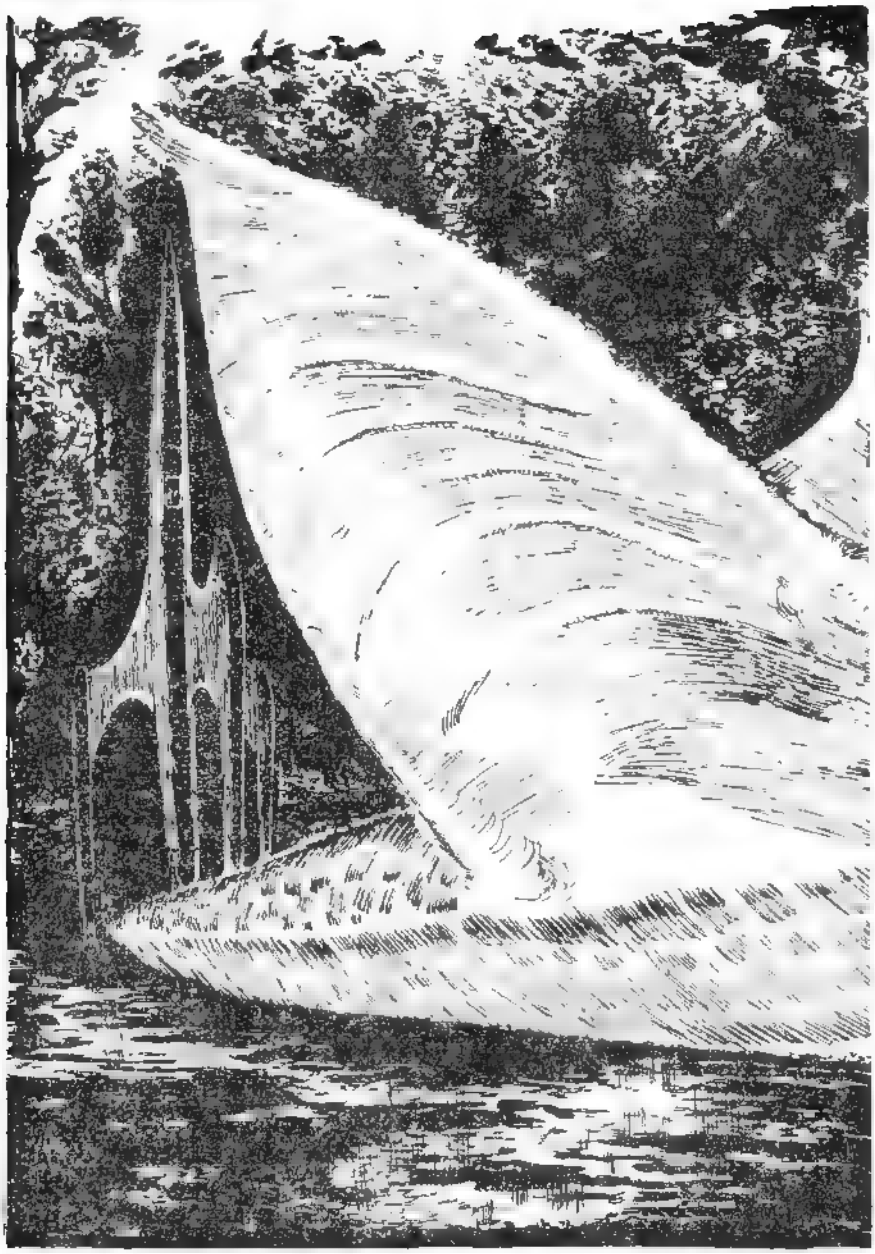
Sorry, but we're completely sold out of issues 1 thru 10

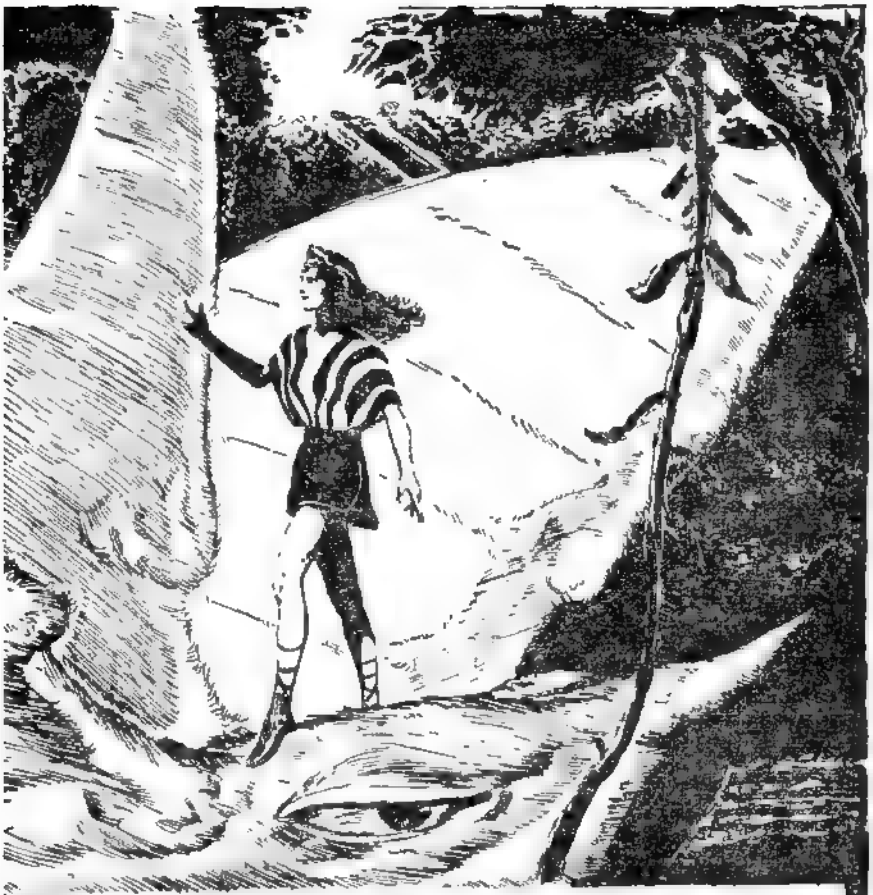
Prepaid orders only accepted. Send your remittance to:

OTHER WORLDS Science Stories

806 Dempster Street **Evanston, Illinois**

Illustration by Charles Harvey.





BEYOND THE BARRIER

Part III

By Richard S. Shaver

Aided by the beautiful Peirae, Mutan Mion continues his search for Arl on the many and varied worlds which lie on the other side of the Barrier.

When Mutan Mion's beloved wife Arl, was kidnapped from the court of mighty goddess Vanue, the only clue was a telepathic message received by one of the Peirae, an egg-laying race of females condemned to a life of loneliness without men by an age-old order of the Council of the Ancient Titans. But in exchange for guiding Mutan Mion to the secret passage through the mysterious Barrier, which was an area of tremendous gravitational intensity barring the way to a universe even more grand than our own, the Peirae demanded his services in carving out a new edict-free existence for them in the new universe, and in battling the strange races that would oppose them.

Accepting the task, Mutan and his warrior comrade, Tyron, boarding the warship Darkome *with their faithful crew, went to the assistance of Elder Oracle and ruler of Peira, Averna. Elyse, one of the court, was their guide, and arriving, they were feted grandly at court. But Mion, anxious to be about the work, was introduced to Saphele, the female space trader who discovered the way through the Barrier. She told him it was via a pair of planets whose orbit intersected both universes, and the passage was by means of a tunnel bored to the center of one of them. The space ship is driven to the center while in one universe, remains there while the passage is made, then emerges in the other universe.*

Mion learned from Averna that they had plans to regain their normal human nature (robbed from them by the ancient variform surgery) and that he is to be a virtual "father" to the new race. He rebeled, but because of Arl, did not refuse, merely leaving the decision to the future.

Descending the shaft in the hollow world, they were trapped in the tunnel, which was too narrow. Below them an enemy ship appeared. But in the ensuing battle, Mion was victorious, and with the ship released, the passage was made. They had captured a Proteus type form of life, and made friends with it. Guided to the native planet of the proteus-people, they had set up an initial base.

While ferrying more Peiran ships through the Barrier, they were attacked by the Daegun, a type of crab people who were very warlike, and it was evident much military preparation would have to be made. Eventually, tiring of delay, Mion decided to take the initiative and attack the Daegun. He did so, and in a whirlwind campaign, shattered their empire. But although the trail to Arl had led to the Daegun, it did not end there, for she was not among the captives Mion learned she had been sold to a mysterious race known as the Ellans. Continuing his search, he headed the Darkome *into unknown space, toward the Ellan menace. What faced him out there he couldn't know . . .*

Now go on with the story:

THE *Darkome* arrowed through the unknown toward the green star which Mutan Mion had learned shone upon the nearest El-

lan colonies.

The crew and the Peiran technicians made altogether nearly a hundred souls aboard the big warship. But as the crew's quarters were built to hold over fifty and the passenger cabins near a hundred, she was not even filled to capacity. The only reason Mion hadn't taken a capacity load was the chance of provisions running short between stops, and the fact they would have to hunt or buy provisions from possibly hostile natives enroute.

Their first stop was to take on water. Several planets they had approached had been seen to be infested with some kind of blighting life that was turnin the green forests into desert tracts, and they did not land. They did photograph the peculiar life-form that was causing the devastation, a builder of great ring cities, cities that were weird round mounds of red rock-like deposits. Around these rings of dwellings or defensive barricades the dwellers could be seen, leveling the forests, digging up the good black soil, leaving an expanse of sterile red soil open to the killing hea' of the sun. Mion settled low over one of these ring-cities, took telescopic photos and telaug records.

The telaug gave a record of complex repetitive thinking, a kind of glorified ant-thought, rich with emotion of a "patriotic" kind. "My country, my state, my people, above all else" went the thought, over and over in every head. It sounded almost admirable, yet the results of it were apparent in the deserts around their cities. "These are the greatest fools I have ever heard expound upon patriotism," muttered Mion, turning to the photos. They revealed a long-bodied insectoid creature, rather attractively colored in a complex green and gold pattern. They went upon two legs, and used their other six legs for wielding tools, the tools with which they destroyed their forests and their soil. Their heads were handsome, almost animal in shape, with well defined nose and chin like humans. When they stood, looking over their successful efforts in making a desert, with their lower arms folded about their slim middle sections, and their noble heads reared upright, large eyes wide—watching yet another forest giant crashing to the earth they looked very like a green-and-gold parody of a woodsman.

Mion chuckled, ran the records simultaneously with the pictures to get the thought and action as they occurred. Then his roars of laughter brought Tyron and Saphele from their work over the charts by the big scopes that gave the heaven's measurements

"When they get through uprooting and destroying all the plant life, they spread chemicals to make the surface sterile forever. They call it *clean*, then! It seems once one of them was killed by a small worm from the soil that burrowed into the breathing apparatus in the thorax, and ever since they have been busy making deserts so the accident may never occur again."

Saphele, listening too, broke into delicious tinkling laughter, which subsided into a sad sound of regret. "It is not so funny; they have destroyed the beauty of a dozen worlds! Those things can travel through space!"

"Something carries them, or else they occur on several planets simultaneously. But what do they eat when the planet is 'clean'?"

"They must die, or migrate en masse to the next."

"There! There's your explanation. It's an ancient ship, God knows from where or when. There is but one! They must use that for their migrations, leave it until necessity causes its use. Let's destroy it. Let them die by their own handiwork and free nature of them." Tyron was pointing on the screen to a small object resting on the plateau of a low range of mountains. They swooped down over it, and it was as Tyron said, a very ancient craft, of the indestructible perdurable metal of the ancients who had colonized Tellus so long ago.

"Still operating after an age of abuse! They built well—the Elder Gods. Let us take it with us, rather than destroy it. Sometimes one can learn so much from one bit of the ancient work, some forgotten secret of science!" Elyse begged, reluctant to see such an ancient thing finally destroyed.

"It would never keep up with the *Darkome!*"

"How do you know?" asked Mion. "Some of their work was superior to anything built today! There were mighty minds alive then, since lost contact with the race. As we may lose contact, and go on forever . . . "

Elyse cried "Good! Then we'll take the ship, and I may study it while we cruise onward."

Mion swooped low over the ancient object, lying seemingly abandoned below them. "I don't believe they have even set a guard about it. It never occurred to them anyone would want it, or that other lives than their own exist."

"Drop a lifter grapple to that hulk!" Tyron bellowed into the intercom, and from amidships a cable snaked down, on the end of it a magnetic grapple and a small lifter unit—an anti-grav unit which would render the ship weightless. In seconds they were towing the craft, and as the cable wound in they saw the size of it. It was larger than the huge *Darkome,* one of the largest craft traveling space! For the *Darkome* was crammed with generators and ray-cannon of several kinds, and was more powerful than any but the huge Dread nors of the Nortan fleet which carried thousands of fighting men.

"Do you recognize it?" asked Mion of Tyron, who could usually name the race and the planet of any ship he saw, as well as the probable year of its construction.

"Too much for me, Chief. Never saw one like it. That hump on the rear I can't explain, nor the twin snouts amidships on the blister. She's a mystery to me."

There's a name on her bow, but I can't make it out. Probably couldn't if it was legible. Well, name a crew

to man her. As soon as we get to weightless space we'll cut her loose, put on an operating crew, see what she can do."

Elyse, suddenly seeing that her interest in the ship might deprive her of Mion's company the rest of the voyage, leave him to Saphele, kept her mouth firmly shut. Not so Saphele. She almost squealed: "Let me go with the operating crew! I want a look at her!" Mion grinned, nodded.

"We'll all take a look. Then, if she runs fast enough to keep her, those who want to ride her may. Can't figure how her power-pile can be still up to capacity, though.

As they began to swing away from the dying planet. Elyse called: "Look at that tower belching black smoke! Are they shooting at us?"

Mion swung the ship to get a better view, then seeing it was no weapon, swung lower to view it. Tyron started the recording and photographing apparatus, which ran automatically as Mion swung the *Darkome* low over the belching volumes of black heavy smoke. The air was polluted for miles, and even up in the stratosphere the frightful stench was nauseating. For many miles the river flowing by was poisoned, the greenery about the banks all dead, and dead fish floating. "That's the most horrible sight I ever saw!" exclaimed Elyse. "They're poisoning the water, to kill the aquatic life and make it *clean!* What a mad race!"

"Mad indeed!" agreed Tyron, removing a spool of telaug recording, to run through an adjacent augmentor without interrupting the recording of further thought from below. His quick hands snapped the switch, and they listened to the multitudinous thoughts of the busy weirdly man-like insects below.

Suddenly they all broke into laughter. It was as they had thought, a paper factory. "They manufacture poison! Somewhere they obtained plans for a paper manufacturing plant and misunderstood them!"

"Or had no real use for paper. Or perhaps they do print it too, and circulate it. But it doesn't matter. The primary product of that factory is the poison they run into the river, which will in turn poison the oceans themselves, on this small world. They aim to kill all other life on the planet. It is their 'patriotic' drive. Strange!"

"The paper is only the by-product of the poison manufacture!"

Tyron was still laughing, holding up a bit of film now. "Look, here they are filling spraying machines with the poison, and spraying it on the ground, to kill all the insects. They think they themselves aren't insects, but rather are a higher form of life. Yet they are acting just as an ant army does, destroying everything in their path They are really weird!"

"See, here are the logs going into the mill, in the polluted water. And here the paper is being loaded and taken away. But what amuses me is that they should have a paper mill operated solely to make a stink and a poison. I wish I could find what they do with the paper!"

Elyse was scanning the films in a

viewer. "I think it is here. Look, the rolls are being unloaded into these circular mounds. If we could just see inside. Mion, please, put a penetray into those mound circles and let's see the home life of this weird man-like creature."

Mion, to allow them to see clearly, swung low over one of the circular cities, switched on the huge penetray which made the whole place like a city of glass. They watched the scene below as a child watches an ant-palace behind glass. Quite suddenly they all broke into delighted laughter.

"Look, the rolls of paper are run through the machine that cuts them into squares. Then each ant-creature gets his share. See the little ants distributing them. Then they look at them to make sure they got a fair share."

Elyse was enraptured. "See, over there the piles of the old paper. They burrow into them to sleep. They are paper wasps!"

Tyron was watching intently too. He focused the penetray closer and closer, and presently they could see printing on the paper. "That machine is a printing press, right enough. They sleep in their newspapers, which is the first sensible thing I've seen about them. They read them first, then make nests of them. And look, over there are books! Rows and rows of the things, but there is nobody reading them. They seem sealed off from everyone."

Mion swung a telaug down, and they listened as the "citizens" read their newspapers. "Government restrictions against the reading of our stored books has resulted in a much closer application of general energy to the task of making the planet clean of all alien life. Soon we will have the whole planet quite sterile."

One thing that amazed them all was that though the *Darkome* and the ship they had taken from the people below were clearly visible above them, they paid them no attention. Mion sought for an answer to this in the moiling scenes below. Soon he found it. "They are incapable of seeing anything that displeases them! It would be unpleasant to see that we had taken their only means of escaping from their own foolishness, so they prefer to pretend we do not exist."

Elyse was laughing at the indescribable disorder of their apartments. "It reminds me of some bachelor apartments I have seen with the daily newspapers piled up about their beds for months back, and everything else lying where they had thrown it."

"I wonder if these creatures *are* bachelors?" asked Saphele, smiling. The telaug soon revealed the truth: they were for the most part neuters or sterile males, the breeding being done by a Queen in the central pile of the mound city. It added to their laughter that this interior in the center was the only one with any semblance of order, the Queen keeping the litter picked up by her own efforts.

"The paper-makers!" mused Tyron, absently. "It gives one pause, remembering the vast libraries of some

human cities. These land destroying creatures have libraries which they dare not use! The humans are more to blame, for they will not, even though they are allowed to use them."

"Some features of that paper-wasp culture of theirs are all too human!" commented Mion, as he once again turned the *Darkome* into space, and back upon course again toward the distant planets of the Ellans.

Once free of gravity, he drew the captured ship alongside, and space-suited figures were soon jumping the gap between. The mystery ship continued a mystery, however, for they could not read what little writing there was left on doorways and on instruments and engines. It was all in totally undecipherable symbols, related to none they had ever studied.

She had a small atom pile for starting the main rotors and to power the weapons on her. The main rotors were of the etheric vortex type which draw power out of space itself, and in this respect she was as modern as the best Nortan ships, though there was no guessing how old she was. The ship was renamed *Adventure* by Saphele, since they couldn't decipher her original name.

"If I could read the numbers on this scale, I could tell you how old this pile is," said Saphele to Tyron as they examined the strange old ship.

"What we don't know don't seem to matter overmuch," grunted Tyron, pulling open the tool lockers one by one and examining the ancient implements, still intact for the most part. "She'll run, indefinitely. That's the main thing. Someday we'll find a way to decipher her log, and then we'll know."

"I'll bet she was made on the other side of the Barrier, found her way through as we did, and then something happened to her crew. But *what* happened to them we'll never know."

"Might be one of the ships that brought the Ellans through, if they came here that way. If so, they'll probably be able to decipher for us. I've got other worries, myself."

"Like what?" smiled Saphele, who was very fond of the big, bluff second in command.

"I've got pioneer's itch. Every good looking little world I see, I think: now, there's a place I could build me a home. And I start figuring how I'd build it, where I'd face my ray-ports to defend her, where I'd bore for the under-parts, and laying out the whole thing in my mind. Then I remember it doesn't make sense, I'm going back to Nor to my post in the Navy, and forget all about this side of the Barrier. But somehow, I keep wanting to set my feet in the earth and just grow. Just pick a spot where I can be boss of all I can see. Why? Why does a man have that itch?"

Saphele laughed joyously. "Oh, my Tyron, you're particularly dense! That's the dominant instinct in mankind. Reaching out into new lands, making new homes. That's the drive behind all civilization. Some don't have it; they're the kind who live in cities after they're started. Others

like you and I are never satisfied except when we are in the wilderness, making it fit for those who will come after. Making it safe for children, and for the folk who will follow—the doctors, lawyers, merchants, farmers . . . are you sure you don't understand?"

Tyron looked at her quizzically. "Maybe I do, little one. Maybe I do. But in me, I don't understand it! I always wanted to keep on the move before. Never even wanted one woman long enough to settle down with her."

Saphele drew in her breath sharply. Then her eyes sparkled. "Close your eyes and picture this place you want to build. Picture yourself coming home at even-tide, tired but feeling glad to be home. You wave your hand before the entrance-eye, and the rocks slide apart to let you in the hillside. You walk in—keep your eyes closed, now—you walk in to the big main chamber, where the sleeping rays canopy the big bed, and the fire burns in the wall niche. Someone turns from the fire, where you smell meat cooking. You take her in your arms, turn her face up to yours. Keep your eyes closed— *Who is she?*"

Tyron opened his eyes. "You sorceress! Your face!"

Saphele's eyes glowed with sudden gladness, and she laughed happily at Tyron's expression. "I did *not* trick you, you idiot! You're in love and don't even know it, till someone tells you. And with me, of all people. I would have sworn you were soft on that smooth Elyse!"

Tyron rubbed his head. He would have sworn she had put that image there in his mind, but still he was fairly sensitive and was rather sure she hadn't. It was quite possible his own mind knew who he wanted without him consciously accepting it. Saphele was a very competent navigator, an expert with all kinds of ships and engines, a person hardly to be considered as feminine because of her extraordinary abilities and her hardihood. Beautiful, yes, but without feminine wiles or artifice, and thus constantly eclipsed by the artful females always about her.

"I know a good way to find out for certain," muttered Tyron, and reached out a sudden huge hand for her. She evaded him with a scream and ran down the corridor of the ancient ship as swift as a deer, with Tyron lumbering after her, laughing like an overgrown boy.

He cornered her in the bow compartments, just beneath the control chamber, where she tried to climb a vertical ladder hand over hand, but one hand slipped on a rung, and he got her by the foot. He plucked her off the ladder and she landed on his broad chest feet first, kicking and squealing. Then he had her in a bear hug. "Pucker up, you tom-boy—I have to learn something for sure. My whole future depends on this. Hold still!"

But she didn't hold still. She squirmed and wriggled and turned her face away, but he subdued her at last by nearly cracking her ribs with

pressure. At last he got his lips to hers, and tasted of them. He closed his eyes and waited while she leaned back and arched her back to break free, but it was no use. At last she subsided, and presently was reaching avidly for more, her face on fire.

Finally he set her down. "Well I'll be—! You little spit-fire, it *is* you."

Saphele straightened her mechanic's cover-all, retied the wide band of green ribbon about her bronze hair, sauntered off. Over her shoulder she called: "Among all these man-traps, you fall for me, who didn't even try to catch you! You'd better walk softly, long legs—I just might not want you. I'm not exactly the marrying kind myself."

Tyron sat down on the ancient chests and watched Saphele go back to her work, drawing up a plan of the ship and checking each power lead and control for need for repairs.

AFTER getting the tow up to the average cruising speed of the *Darkome*, Mion cut loose the magnetic grapples and wound in the cable. Every relay and wire and cable in the ship's complex and unfamiliar wiring system had to be checked, many parts replaced. It would be weeks of work thoroughly to renovate the old craft and to test every part apt to fail under strain. But when they had finished, they would have another ship of equal capacity to the *Darkome* or more, and of equal fighting ability. They intended to re-weapon her, after finding out just what her strange ancient weapons could do, and divide their number into two equal parts so that both ships could be handled equally well. Just what her speed would be was hard to tell until tests were made. It was possible ways of stepping up her present power might be found. It was also possible it would not be needed. Many of the ancient ships one ran into still operating in backwaters of space were quite fast, and some were marvels of science unequaled today.

Aboard the new-old *Adventure*, Peiran technicons worked around the clock, so as not to delay the expedition. After some days, Mion decided to make a side trip to look over a small star and three planets they were approaching, then return to the *Adventure's* present course and overtake her. He would not have done so, but the ship's engines could be operated in an emergency. It was evident the weird wasp-race had operated her regularly.

The star cluster through which they were traveling they had named Ora for purposes of map-construction. The little sun toward which Mion headed they had named Ora 3, the third of the cluster as they passed inward. They were looking for an Ellan colony, and according to their information they should be approaching the first of them. Mion could not pass by one habitable world for fear that might be the one where he would learn of Arl's whereabouts.

The first of the three planets they examined was a gloomy place of craggy mountains, deep canyons, swift rivers, ancient dark foliaged

trees concealing all the surface. They could descry no signs of human habitation from the air, so they left it and swung toward the next, nearer the sun.

Mion observed to Elyse: "'Twould make a good world, if a few trees were removed to let in the sun."

"It makes a good home for the wild animals as it is. I could love it, wild and untouched and gloomy. No one would ever suspect anyone lived there if it were left as it is."

Mion smiled: "Perhaps beneath all that dark verdure a million clever intelligences are laughing at our conclusion no one lives there."

On their viewplates a flickering something began to grow from nothingness. They watched it absently, talking to each other. Then it was full-formed, a solidity dead ahead, and Elyse gave a cry of terror. Mion let an oath of utter surprise.

"By Bacchus, an Aeolian!"

"W-w-w-what's an Aeolian?" asked Elyse, staring in frozen horror at the apparition ahead.

Mion stalled the ship, checking its forward speed with the side jets, holding it motionless with the object just off the bow. They were still within the gravitational field of the planet, and began a slow drift downward. "An Aeolian is a member of a highly evolved life form which exists in space, needing no air or other matter around for its life cycle. They are little known, much speculated upon by various writers. Many discredit their existence. I have never seen one before myself."

"Oh," sighed Elyse, relaxing slightly from her rigidity. "By the look of it, I'd call . . . I don't know what I would call it. It has eyes, but no proper face. It has a body, but no wings or limbs. How does it get around?"

A voice came suddenly into the control chamber, a voice like a sighing wind, strong and gusty and somewhat superior, scornful of their solidity, perhaps. "I had been wondering when the other side would find a way through . . . " The strange pale large eyes of it, drifting ahead of a shapeless, flattish bulk seemed to twinkle with a malicious humor. It was a purely mental voice; no lips moved, there was no mouth or lungs.

Mion grinned, something about its mental voice appealed to him. "How does it know we're from the other side of the Barrier?" he asked Elyse.

"It's psychic, of course. It would have to be, having no other means of communication in airless ether. The correct name should be Aetherian, shouldn't it?"

The strange life drifted closer, and at last plastered its flattish body across the view-plates, as if to peer in better. "But the view plates outside are only nozzles containing eyes for a teleview augmenter! It can't be bigger than the nozzle orifice!"

"About three inches across . . . " muttered Mion. "And it can't peer in through them—they operate in only one direction. Someone's making game of us!"

The object lifted, drifted farther away. Then its voice came again.

"Just checking to make sure you're not primitives. Glad to meet you. Lords of Nor, Ladies of Peira, wherever they may be. I am Gelius, of Orn Aetherians, and my size is whatever I wish to make it. Can I help you? Are you searching for something in this area of space?"

"Primitives in space ships?" asked Elyse.

"On this side of the Barrier there are few who know anything of advanced mechanics. Yet some of these races who have found ancient space ships from a time before the Barrier existed operate them, but they do not understand them, would not have figured out I was the same size as the eye of the teleview."

Mion said: "I am searching for a settlement of the Ellans, who have my wife. They bought her as a slave from the Daegun."

"Ah yes, the Ellan peoples. A highly intelligent race of whom I am very fond, though they know me not. I would rather you did not mention my showing myself to you. I don't want every space ship that crosses the void sending out ethero-vibran messages to locate my kind. Let them use their charts. They would forever be asking us directions . . ."

Mion ignored all this, though understanding it. He repeated: "The whereabouts of the Ellans? I have no charts of these heavens, lonely one."

"Lonely! Not I. I have my thoughts, and there are sometimes others of my kind, I do not know the meaning of the word. You will find the Ellans precisely where you expect to find them under that A1 sun you have marked as your destination. Why ask when you know where to find them already?"

Elyse snorted. "Because we didn't know, superior one. We only guessed they might know enough to pick a benevolent sun to colonize under."

"There was something else . . ." the quivering long flatness of the ether dweller seemed to pause for thought, went on: "Oh, yes. There was news of the Daegun, and since you come from there, you should know. They have had a terrible war . . ."

Mion laughed. "We were in that war, superior one. Your news is late."

The Aetherian laughed in turn. "That is what you think, Nortan. This is a later war. The Daegun reunited, turned upon their destroyers after you left."

Mion blanched, leaned back in sudden dejection. "I had thought them utterly dismembered; that it would take them an age to become one people again."

"Your work was not complete." The Aetherian seemed to be reading his words out of Mion's relaxed mind. "They did unite . . . and your lovely Peirans are near destroyed . . ."

"It's lying!" Elyse started to her feet, her face flushed with anger. "It's not an intelligent creature, just a malicious pretender who reads your thoughts and then makes up words to fool you with your own fears. Pay no attention to it."

As if in fear at her words, the

thing suddenly wrapped itself in a strange spiral of motion and darted away. In seconds it was beyond sight. They knew it must have made itself even smaller as it went.

"I think you're right, Elyse. But you could be wrong. However I do not believe it could have had any news of the Daegun prior to that we bring in our own minds. For there is no ship can travel faster than the *Darkome* on this side the Barrier. So we will disregard its message, go on with our search."

Elyse did not reply for a long moment, then she said: "I think that deceitful beast of space revealed one thing to us in spite of its intentions."

"Eh? What?"

"We are wasting time searching out every likely planet we pass. As the thing suggested, we should head toward that *A1* star we want to head toward and pass up all these minor worlds where only lesser intelligences could be bred up, anyway. They could have nothing of value for us except your Arl. And I doubt we will find any of these lesser suns, with their fourth class index of radiation, harboring a race capable of traveling to the center of the Daegun fearlessly to trade. It would require a powerful people to overawe the Daegun sufficiently to trade with them in safety."

Mion slapped a heavy palm to his leg. "Only there will Arl be found, eh! You've hit it, girl. I think you're right."

The *Darkome* wheeled in a tight circle under Mion's heavy hand, shot back toward a rendezvous with the *Adventure*. Elyse smiled, knowing Mion had merely been killing time in this side expedition, to give the mechanics time to ready the ship for fast, extended travel. Yet he let her think she had pointed out to him something he had known very well himself.

When the *Darkome* rejoined the *Adventure*, she was nearly ready for a trial of her refitted drive and new controls. Mion paced her, as they revved up to maximum acceleration. The more frail Peirans in their acceleration chairs paled, their flesh seemed to shrink, their eyes bled drops of scarlet. They blacked out. But still Tyron at the controls of the *Adventure* and Mion in the *Darkome* held the throttles back, letting the *Adventure* expend her full energies, to find out what she could do in comparison with the huge-engined Nortan craft.

Bit by bit the *Adventure* forged ahead, the *Darkome* dropped behind. There were no eyes but Mion's and Tyron's and one or two of the Nortan crew who remained conscious during the terrific acceleration to see that they had discovered one of the great ships of the far past, a super-ship capable of greater feats than the best the present day could build.

When they finally cut the drives, the two great ships were targeted upon the distant star of the highest index of life-giving radiation, and past their screens the nearby stars wheeled in visible motion. Through both ships the Peirans cavorted in

relief at the weightless condition replacing the unbearable acceleration pressure, doing their always lovely dances in the air, gliding from hull-wall to bulk-head to curved ceiling and back again. On and on drove the two great ships, side by side, and on both ships an exhilaration from knowledge of the unprecedented velocity they were traveling swept the crews. A kind of impromptu celebration took place.

While they gaily drank and sang and danced, the stars fled past them, and space wheeled away. The Fates eyed them askance for headlong recklessness, and the darkness itself paled before them. Time seemed to shrink upon itself, and it seemed but a few hours, though in truth many days, before the deceleration pressure spoiled all their fun, and confined them to their chairs again.

The two ships had hardly slowed down from their interstellar velocity to an interplanetary speed, when a diffuse beam directed toward them was picked up by their detectors. Alarms sounded through the ships, and every man swung his chair and activated his sighting screens, readied his ray-nozzles for action.

On the *Adventure*, Tyron grinned to Saphele. "Well, little wisdom-worker, tell me what is this ray that searches us out?"

"It is a message and a warning. Presently they will tell you where to land to avoid destruction. And if you do not, you may wish you had. These will not be Daegun primitives. These will be intelligent humans, able to protect themselves . . . maybe able to destroy us. But they will not."

"And why will they not?" asked Tyron, swinging the view nozzles to catch some sight of the source of the threat.

"Because they have brought the slaves from the Daegun here, and among them are many from Nor, and the slaves will recognize this ship."

"And what will slaves be doing out here in space?" asked Tyron, absently.

"Because they have not reached destination yet. We have overtaken their ship that bought them from the Daegun."

Tyron laughed. "That was an event that took place months before we started! How could we overtake them?"

Saphele laughed, mocking him. "You are a blockhead. We are not near any planet, yet a ship puts a detector ray upon us to learn who we are. What other ship would be out here between the Barrier and this star we approach? It is the likeliest probability. They have no ships with the speed of these we ride, hence it has taken them all this time to cover the same distance."

"You might be right, at that. It is good enough guessing. But I'll swear you had some other sense at work if it turns out you're right."

"Perhaps I have another sense. But how did you learn that?"

"Elyse told us, on the trip to Peira. But how does it work on something our own ship's sensitive detectors can't tell us?"

"Well," Saphele was smiling mockingly at him still, and he was grinning back, "since you cannot guess I cannot tell you. I can only ask: how do you know that some red thing you see is red? How do you know the night is dark? What tells you?"

"My eyes tell me."

"So it is with my extra sense. It tells me such things. I do not have to see it, or hear it, or taste or smell it. I just *know* it."

"Must be handy to have. We call it woman's intuition. What do you call it?"

"We have many theories about it, none of them very good theories. The one I like says that the separate small cells of our double minds have a way of contracting sub-microscopic life forms, which permeate everything. That those life forms have a way of contacting sub-microscopic hand has a way of knowing the brain wishes it to move."

"A sort of constant contact through sub-atomic space . . ." mused Tyron, quite sober now. "And you know that's the Ellan ship bearing the slaves we seek, eh. Better tell Mion —he might fire on 'em when he spots 'em."

Tyron beamed his telaug to the other ship, swiftly gave him Saphele's words. Mion thanked her. "Saphele, I will owe you more than I can pay if this word of yours is true. If not, perhaps no harm is done. We'll not fire on it, unless it forces us to do so."

But the alien craft proved elusive, and though they sought the beam that had touched them through all surrounding space, they found it not. Evidently the strange ship had changed course and put on speed and there was no way to know where or what direction.

Saphele sighed, murmuring to Tyron. "Let us pray this is not the closest pass he will make of her. It would be too cruel of the Fates to let him not find her now, after passing her in the darkness by that small distance."

Tyron put his arm about her, and together they watched the night through as they all sought vainly to pick up the trail left by the strange ship.

"Must have given one burst, then shut off the engines—or we'd pick up their ion trail. We'll have to circle for days to find it . . . or else make for that same sun we started toward. It is now but a day or so ahead if we pass up all the other possible stops hereabout."

They gave up the search, after a time, and Elyse took another reading of the now close-by sun they had been aiming toward. After checking her figures, she cried out: "We will learn things about life under this sun! It is the highest source of life-creating rays I have ever indexed!"

"Should be interesting," Mion commented, swinging the *Darkome* toward the nearest planet. "Let's look at some of this life the sun has been so kind to, and judge for ourselves."

AN hour later the *Darkome* came to rest upon the waters of a great green ocean. From above there

had been numerous signs of intelligent life—great parks and roadways, race courses and huge farming tracts, boats on the waters, flying craft winging across the skies. But few signs of habitation. The wild forests seemed still virgin, and the farmsteads possessed no great farmhouses, no dwellings. No swarm of inquisitive human aircraft rose to greet them, and as they let the *Darkome* coast across the ocean swell toward the distant shores, no living thing paid them attention but a few sailing craft which swung toward them.

As these craft, traveling very swiftly before the wind, swung closer to circle the slowing *Darkome,* the whole crew of the *Darkome* let out a simultaneous shout of wonder and awe. Mion swung his telaug beam upon the boats, and cried out in awe, too. For the boats were living birds.

"Whoever lives upon this planet must possess the secret of life itself!" Elyse cried out, watching the utter grace of the nearest, tacking and coming about, to pause beside the now still *Darkome* and peer at them with its living eyes set in its prow. The wings of it were its sails, grown that way, the masts its own wingbones! Its body was not large compared to the huge wings, and Mion exclaimed in wonder as the penetrays reveled its keel beneath the water, a growth from its broad chest, membranous, large in proportion as the keel of a racing boat—which it was in fact! A living racing craft!

"That thing was never produced by nature of its own design!" Mion mused. Elyse and the other Peirans crowded about him to watch the screens.

Elyse murmured: "These people, whoever they are, grow things like that for mere sport."

"What other wonders will we see on this world . . ." growled Mion, his voice deep with worry. "What wonders that may be too much for us to cope with, if they prove inimical."

Elyse shook her head. "They will not. Such people must have risen above mere primitive animosities. And certainly no alien shape would give them any feeling of strangeness. They themselves create shapes to suit themselves. They have mastered the secret of life!"

From the *Adventure,* now landed, Tyron spoke to them over the telaug beam. "I'll race you in that, Mion! If the wind fails, it will just flap its wings slightly, and presto, it crosses the finish line first."

Peering into its thoughts, Mion found utter loyalty in that little mind in the bird-head prow, utter devotion to winning the race, utter love for its master. He liked the thing, as one likes a great calm, grave dog at sight, knowing its great heart intuitively. He spoke to it with the telaug beam, into its mind. "Where are those who created you, Sailor-of-the-wide-waters."

"Presently they will greet you. They are many, and they will show themselves in time."

"Are there many such creatures as yourself, life shaped to a new pur-

pose by its masters?" asked Mion, letting his curiosity voice itself over the telaug.

"All life is shaped by the creator, Lord Mion." answered the sailing-bird. "Am I different?"

Mion granted the truth of that, and Elyse was for instantly dropping guard, getting out and taking a sail in this friendly living boat.

"I sense a preponderance of T-ions, the sensation of joyous life and abundant living," mused Mion, "but still I suggest we let caution prevail. The fact we do not see any of the ruling life-forms tells me they have reason to fear strangers. From like cause we too should have reason for caution."

"*Sense-a-t-ion's* not enough, eh?" Elyse was sniffing the rich fragrant air from off the coast, standing in the open locks above the water lazily lapping the sides of the *Darkôme*. "I say there is no reason to fear these people."

Mion stood beside her, now, looking out over the clean blue water, tinted deeper with the rich green of abundant algae, toward the towering trees of the distant slopes, fragrant pines and other stranger trees unknown to them. He laughed with the sheer joy of the fresh morning and the strong life forces here seeming to pulse visibly over the seascape. As they stood thus, feeling very like Gods surveying some great new dominion, Saphele came suddenly swooping around the huge prow of the ancient *Adventurer*, riding the racing bird-boat, standing in the shallow bowl of the bird's back behind its prow-head. The bird gave a strange eerie cry of pleasure and Saphele stroked its sleek broad head, great as a hogshead but flat and somehow suggestive of a weapon on its neck. As the boat swung broadside with a flourish of its sleek white feathered wing-sails, Saphele leaped to the top of the broad head, and without a pause stepped off beside them in the open lock. She turned about, stooped, and stroked its strange feathered brows, murmuring meaningless endearments in a cooing tone. Then with one beat of the great sail-pinions it was gone across the water, swift and sure, and they saw for one instant the great paddle-foot of it driving as it turned into the wind and then swung oceanward as the wind filled out its wings and drove it away. One great cry of gladness and farewell it gave.

Somehow it was the best greeting they could have had on that world of strange and wondrous life.

Still they waited, and still the hidden masters of this weird world where life itself was shaped to purpose, and that purpose not its own—came not. So presently they lifted the two ships just above the water on the anti-gravs, drifted light as thistle-down shoreward and on over the land in search of humans—or whatever kind of thing might rule here.

"Look," cried Saphele, "there goes a great lizard, long as our own warcraft, pulling after it load of vines and their fruit. And riding it a little brown boy! Swing nearer, I would

speak with that child!"

The boy was perched on the dinosaur's neck, clinging to a thick collar with a square protuberance. As they settled to earth close beside the huge lizard, the boy touched the box on the collar, and the great snakish thing came to a halt, stood passively, gazing at them with mild eyes empty of thought.

The giant Nortan space-man swung the air-lock open, and Saphele poised there above the boy, the lizard so huge that the boy could have reached out and touched her feet. In her hand she carried a small portable telaug, of the kind used by the Nortans for social gatherings, and by their use facilitated conversation and understanding. She touched the boy with mildly stimulative rays, asked him mentally what his name and his people.

"My people are called the Vi-ans," he replied, speaking orally in a tongue she would not have entirely understood but for the telaug in her hand giving her his thought. The tongue she recognized as one allied to the ancient Mantong of the elder race, but much changed in sound and usage with the passage of centuries. "I am called Gan-he-go, he went on. "They called me that because I ran around so much when I was younger."

Saphele chuckled. Gan-he-go meant in Mantong, "again he goes" or "always he goes," meaning "one who is always coming or going." Then she asked, orally in her tongue, though her meaning was conveyed to the boy by the telaug beam: "Are your people apt to welcome us as peaceful travelers, or to assume we are come to make trouble, and attack us?"

Gan-he-go laughed, then. "Ho, you are stupid! Vi-ans never make war on anyone. Only make war when someone makes war on them. Then, oh Gods of the Barrier, they destroy those who make war!"

"Good, Gan-he-go. I will go with you to meet your people." Saphele turned, waved a hand to the Nortan crewmen and Peirans gathered behind her, leaped lightly to the broad back of the great lizard. "Wait here, friends, until I singly make certain of this boy's statement. Do not open until I return again."

Mion would not have sent her, but since she chose to go alone to talk to these strange people who moulded life to suit their desires, it might be best to wait until she returned. He lifted the ship a little higher in the air, let it hang there on the anti-gravs where he could see in all directions clearly, and they waited impatiently while the great lizard ambled ponderously away through the fields, fields shoulder high with a straight strong cane that was like sugar cane. As the great platform with the vines glided beneath them, they saw the vines were loaded with huge grapes nearly the size of apples. Elyse watched them go soberly. "These people truly are wizards of the life force, Mion. We must learn all we can from them. Never in my life did I see such grapes!"

"The thing on the lizard's neck—the boy thought of it by its name

when I suggested the question in his mind. The name of the thing was the "Stop-mech-go," and it is allied to the telaug in principle It is strapped on above the spinal column: one button allows enough energy to pass the spinal nerves to allow the legs to move. The other button shorts out the nerve impulses, allows only enough to pass to keep the life processes operating. It is paralysis utilized for the control of the huge beasts."

Elyse nodded absently.

After a moment she said: "I'm worried, Mion. Any people with such perfect knowledge of life could be terrible: terrible in what they could do to the race. Or do to enemies . . . or helpless captives"

Mion turned serious too. "You're right, Elyse. But with such knowledge, they should know enough to leave their own race alone. Or at least to limit their work to genuine improvements . . .

"Exactly why I'm worried. Remember the variform wars of the solar system? They arose from the work of scientists who thought only of improving the race. They changed the human race so much the various kinds of people couldn't get along with each other."

Mion shook his head. "There was nothing wrong with their work or the ideals behind their work. What went wrong was the sun, which degenerated from an A class sun to a B—a low grade B—almost overnight. The wars would have arisen if there had been no variforms."

Elyse smiled, still watching the tops of the trees below. "By overnight you mean over three centuries, Lord Mion. Do you always stretch things so?"

"In the life of a sun, that is overnight But the point is I see no cause for worry in this people's knowledge of the plasticity of life-forms. They can create all the new life-forms they wish without harming anyone."

Elyse turned away from the big view-screens. "If they do, Lord Mion. If they can leave well enough alone. But that would take real wisdom, to know when to leave alone, and when to tamper."

Mion pointed at the screen, where a lumbering something neared them. It was the behemoth, dragging his vast skid platform, and on his neck the little boy. "They seem to take our arrival lightly enough, if they send the little boy back to tell us we are welcome."

The behemoth stopped beneath them, and Mion lowered the *Darkome* until the lock was level with the little boy again.

He called out to the Peirans standing there, six beauties, some no larger than himself—"Gee, you're pretty girls all right. Are they all like you on the other side of the Barrier?"

The Peirans were delighted at their small conquest, and answered with laughter. "Are you sure you're old enough to be a good judge of beauty?"

The boy laid one finger alongside his nose, and answered. "Old enough to know that much. My dad says to

tell you that if you're really from beyond the Barrier you are welcome. But if you aren't, he wouldn't guarantee anything."

Elyse had come from the bow, now, and she asked: "How can we meet your rulers? Isn't there some official welcoming to be done? We can't just go ahead and look the place over, can we?"

"Dad is coming with some neighbors. Just hold your dinos. I've got to get to work."

The huge lizard lumbered on its way, and they "held their dinos."

There were several Peiran disks aboard and the Peirans got these out, began to cruise around looking over the unbelievable herbiage.

SAPHELE left the back of the dino in response to the boy's gesture: "That's the place. Go right in, they're waiting for you."

"Who's waiting?" asked Saphele, looking at the strange structure with a quiver of apprehension.

"The 'ministrators, that's who!" explained the boy, grinning. "What's-a-matter—you bashful? They don't bother you none! They're just like people, only they look different . . . But you'll see. Go on in."

Saphele started toward the distant doorway, up a long flight of wide steps. As she paused before the double door, a voice said: "Hello, stranger," and the door swung open. There was no one there, and Saphele was sure it was not a ray—she could feel that. Only one thing could have spoken, the door itself. She looked at it closely. Then she touched it, drew back a startled hand, for it was warm and soft to the touch. It was flesh!

She looked at the hinges, and saw they were not metal, but bony protuberances like elbows that fastened the door to the building itself. The building . . . must be alive! She touched the rough grayish wall, and withdrew her hand with the same startled sensation of the impossible. It was warm . . . it was flesh!

"Of course, I am alive!" said the same voice as before. "Didn't you ever see a living house before? If I wasn't alive, how would I repair myself?"

Saphele gasped, then managed: "You couldn't repair yourself. But I'm just not used to living houses."

She hurried on through the open door before the house decided to go on with the conversation. There was a large vestibule, and two arms came down from the wall and stretched waiting hands for her clothes. Saphele had nothing she felt like parting with, so compromised by touching the hands with her finger tips to let them know she didn't need them. They retreated again against the wall, fading into the mottled brown and gold design so neatly she could hardly see them. She wondered what they would have done with wraps if she had given them.

She passed beyond the vestibule, stood facing a long sunlit corridor, in which plants bloomed rather luxuriantly, so that she could not see very far for drooping fronds of greenery. It

was like a conservatory, with couches and chairs scattered about the red and brown mottled floor. There was no one in sight. She paced slowly on, her heart a little fluttery, for the boy had said: "Of course, they look different from people."

She stopped suddenly, for a pair of familiar legs thrust negligently from one of the couches. On tip toe she peeked around the high back of the thing, saw Captain Tyron, his cropped blond head dropping in a doze. Without waking him she took a seat at his side, feeling vastly reassured to have his strength close beside her again. After a moment he snorted, waking himself, opened one eye, looked at her a long second, then closed it again. She cried out: "Wake up. I saw you open your eye."

Tyron opened both eyes, grinned. "I thought for sure I was dreaming when I saw you, and was all for drifting off to see some more of you."

"What are you doing here? We left you near the beach, and I thought you were going to stay there."

"Why should I stay there? The fairest kind of nymph came along on the back of a flying bird, invited me here to see the bosses. So I came."

"But you didn't see them yet? A little boy brought me. What became of your nymph?"

"What became of your little boy?" asked Tyron, squinting quizzically. "And just how big a little boy?"

Saphele tossed a scornful palm. "Is there no one of adult years, then, in all this land? Nothing but living doors, and winged boats that live, houses that have brown and gold hide and arms in the walls? I am very anxious to understand this place."

"I've seen nothing the ancient variform technicons couldn't have duplicated, yet. Just new applications of old and well known methods of growth control."

Saphele sniffed, her eyes scornful. "But they never did. There is a flexibility of knowledge here that bespeaks a vast and ancient culture, superior to anything in our own race's past. I'd say there was plenty here that we could learn to our benefit."

Tyron nodded, his face serious. "You're probably right, but I'm not being unfaced because of that. And, since they're probably listening, it might be wiser if we said nothing whatever about ourselves."

Saphele relaxed, leaned back in the chair. "Very well, you button your lip and I'll manage mine."

"At least until we know more about our hosts." amended Tyron, and they sat in silence for several minutes, listen to the quiet chittering of several parti-colored birds in the branches nearby. Then there came a slow shuffling step, and Tyron got to his feet to greet . . .

"Keep your seat, stranger. We do not stand on formality here," came a voice, the voice of an old man. Tyron made mental note that these people had not conquered age, though they seemed to have conquered so many

other secrets of life. But as the man neared, leaned on a tall cane, Tyron gazed into his face and amended it. Here was a man who had lived so long that age had caught him, as it inevitably must when it is known to set it back again and again.

He was a very large old man, his frame bigger than Tyron's, but the flesh on his bones was withered, and his face hung in deep folds. "So you are from beyond the Barrier?" His voice was very deep and strong, not so old sounding as his looks.

Tyron resumed his couch, and the old man sat down on a footstool, leaning on his cane and peering at both of them alternately with curiosity and delight in their evident culture. "How do you know that?" asked Tyron.

The old man chuckled. "I know each and every race of human in all this area of space—you could be from none of them. Of those races beyond the Barrier I know nothing whatever, as our own people came through so long ago the method of passing the Barrier was forgotten. I kept you waiting, and had my servants listen in hopes you would reveal the method of passing the Barrier. Then I decided it might be wiser to ask you. And again, I thought that it might be wisest of all not to learn."

Saphele laughed, her soprano ringing cheerfully through the huge place. "Now indeed you are wise, old one. This is Captain Tyron, late Commander of Warcraft of the Nortan Empire, and our second in command. I am Saphele, an explorer and trader for the Peiran matriarchy. It was I who discovered the passage through the Barrier. And we mean to close it again, so it will do you no good to ask where or how it may be."

The old man nodded his head over and over, as if doddering. "As I thought," he murmured, his eyes gray with passionless wisdom on hers. "On the farther side things are even less good than here."

Tyron was sitting erect now, and leaned forward. "We bring a whole race to colonize, father . . ."

"Father Menes, if you wish to call me father. . ." the old one sighed a little, as if wishing for strength to match their own bounding vitality. Saphele glanced at Tyron, who nodded consent. Saphele smiled into the old eyes, and whispered to him as if there were some who might hear. "We bring you a way of defeating age, if it is age that has weighed you down. And other things we know, to trade with you for similar wisdom."

"Little woman, you are not jesting? Once—it is written in our records—the way of defeating age was known to our people. But that way was lost. Much we retained of the ancient wisdom, true. But there were many battles with the beast tribes, when we first came, and somehow the best technicons were slain, the way lost. We retained the variform methods, certain other things from the old time. But to the best of our efforts to reconquer the secret of age

nature did not give her consent."

Saphele smiled confidently. "Then we will be welcome here, and you will aid us in our search . . ."

Tyron broke in. "We seek word of a woman of our own worlds, a captive of the Omini, captured again by the Daegun, then sold to the Ellans. We would find that woman, our leader's wife."

The old man nodded repeatedly, listening. "Welcome, yes, lass, to me at least. And I am sorry there is no news of such a slave, for we Vi-ans do not keep slaves or buy them, either."

Tyron suddenly had a thought. "Look, old one—Father Menes—it is not that we are warlike; but have you no organized defenses? Suppose we were would-be conquerors! How would you stop us? So far we have seen no signs of formal government."

Menes gave him a slow, significant smile. "We could have blasted your ships to notaingness long ago, before they ever touched the sea of Vira. Our defenses are not on exhibition, and neither is our government, but they exist. We do not believe in ostentation."

"Good. Then you will have no fear if I send for the others to meet you? You will not think wrong of us? You are the head of this government, at least a high official?"

"I am the oldest among us. But we have an acting head in our undercaverns, who hears everything we say and sees everything we do."

"Of course," Tyron grinned. "That is the way it would be with us. I am glad that I understand this much. Now if we are welcome, we would like to take water and food aboard, rest for a day or two. Can you accommodate us, or would it be better if we remained on our ships? There will be no offense taken if you do not wish any snooping."

"Your intentions have been recorded, and you are understood. We will provide a welcome. But I did want to talk with you about the other side of the Barrier, however uninteresting that is to you. And I will explain about our life in return . . . But meanwhile, come, and I will show you where you may rest, and arrange for the others."

Elder Menes stood, passed ahead of them toward the outer door by which they had entered. Tyron and Saphele followed him, hoping they would find the others of this unique society less depressing than the old man had been. They found him standing in the vestibule, both hands against the outer door, the one Saphele had examined with such interest on finding it alive. It was shut tight. Not a ray of light showed where it joined the walls of the "house." Saphele wondered idly at the hopeless expression on his face. He turned then, with his back to the door, and in a voice in which tragedy wove a deep undertone, a kind of moaning like a wind before a storm, said: "Dear strangers, I fear that now I must tell you the sad truth. The Vi-ans are a people enslaved! I had hoped our terrible rulers would have ignored your coming, allowed

us to entertain you and let you go your way. But they must fear the powers behind you, or perhaps fear you yourselves for things they read in your minds that I know not of. This living shell has become our prison!"

Tyron moved past the tall thin figure, shoved one powerful shoulder against the living bulwark that had shut them in. There was no least give in the strong door. There was vast power in the living hinges of the thing. Tyron gave Saphele a significant glance full of their sudden peril. A thrill of fear ran down her spine, mixed with an admiration for Tyron whose big square face was like chiseled stone.

Tyron turned to the old man, and his wide hand grasped the thin neck suddenly, his blue eyes snapping angry sparks like electricity running over an ice field: "Now, gaffer, it's time you told us the whole truth about this place you've allowed us to be trapped in. If you knew this living shell could turn into a prison, and did not want us trapped, how then let us enter?"

The old man gasped, the slight color drained from his flesh, leaving it like one long dead. "Violence gains you nothing. Let your strong blood drive you astray as it may, only cool wits will avail you now."

Tyron shook his ancient frame slightly, so that his feet flapped on the floor and his long arms swayed loosely: "Look grandpapa, I'll thumb off your breath quick as I'd slap a fly, don't think otherwise. Now speak—what is this thing has us, and why have you let it trap us?"

"Not a word will I speak to help you, treacherous guest that you try to be. Not a word until you calm your choler and seat yourself and let me speak in my own way. You have one kind of courage, I have another. Think you death affrights me? There is little left me to live for."

The high color came suddenly back to Tyron's anger-paled cheeks, and he released the old man. "Now there's a thing, believe me, old one. I never before threatened one so much weaker than myself with any physical harm. I beg your forgiveness."

Saphele had stood watching this strange tableau with one finger-tip in her pretty mouth, deep in thought, almost oblivious to the play between the two. She knew Tyron well enough to know he would never hurt one like Menes. She was trying to run back over everything that had occurred since they arrived to perhaps pick out some significant point, some slight thing overlooked at the time that would give her a clue as to why they were imprisoned. And but one thing stood out. They had thus far met no living soul on the planet except the beasts and one small boy... and this ancient Menes.

Tyron took her arm, knowing she was deep in thought, and led her back after the old man to the center of the round room of the many plants. As they walked, he listened to her thought, and he exclaimed: "I wondered about that too, but

passed it off. It is the key to the situation here. There are no people left free of this usurping domination except such as Gan-he-go, too young and innocent to be a threat to them."

"Have we hit the situation with our guess?" asked Tyron of the old man, now seated and rubbing his neck with many grimaces. "Can you give us a complete picture of what is wrong here, briefly?"

"Yes, I can. As you are going to be here for some time, it might be wise for you to calm yourselves and expect the worst. Now listen carefully."

With an effort Tyron leaned back, and Saphele crossed her graceful legs. At which the old man put a glass to his eye and leaned forward to inspect her calves. Tyron snorted in disgust. "Now, old one, I swear at your age you have seen a woman's legs before!"

"I was looking for the operation marks, if any. Our people are so disfigured . . . when they're alive. You see, long ago we were a free people, happy and content with this world, which is exceedingly fertile. And as they grew in wisdom, they constructed great caverns underground, as is the custom of our ancestors beyond the Barrier. Down there the many machines required much supervision. They entered into research to contrive some method of releasing their people from this duty underground. They invented the robot mind, a living thing, but different. It was a bit of brain-matter cultured in *vitro* until it grew large enough to learn to operate a machine. If they had stopped there, all would have been well. But they went on, growing greater and greater minds, relegating more and more of their duties to the minds in the glass vats—until the inevitable happened. Some of the great minds became egocentric, and there was no provision made for their control. They wiped out the surface rulers with the great weapon ray from the depths, took over control of our life."

Tyron broke in: "The Atlans of Earth once used the same system. They called their minds 'bottle-ro,' and they were used for most of the unpleasant work. But they never went mad. It was the human beings who went mad."

The old man nodded. "The minds who took control were utterly devoid of emotion. They began to experiment with the human race itself, in insane attempts to fit men to the various duties the minds allotted to them . . . exactly as they themselves had been grown to fit certain duties. They are hard to understand. I have no least idea why they imprison you people, for instance, except that it will be very unpleasant and unnatural to you."

Saphele stood up suddenly, her eyes desperate: "So this world is ruled from the caverns by things that cannot move from their glass bottles!" Saphele was overtaken by her fears, evidently, for her eyes now darted everywhere about the big room full of plants.

Tyron soothed her, his powerful voice gentle as a breeze: "Sit down,

dear woman! There will be no good come of letting fear rule you. Think instead of how we may win free. After all, we are not primitives. We should be able to overcome a few bottle-ro."

"Did they create these living houses, the bird-boats, the other strange things?" asked Saphele, sitting down again, but on the arm of the old man's great chair.

Menes nodded. "Most things were created by the scientists before they took over. But they went on with such work, enlarging upon the applications, trying to establish absolute control of all life forms. Their end was to enslave every living thing on this world to their will. They have nearly succeeded. That is why they have imprisoned you. You are not under their absolute control, hence you must be."

The little telaug, hanging from a belt about Tyron's shoulder, by which the whole conversation had been made understandable to both of them, suddenly gave a strange blat of mental sound, not audible to the ear. Tyron turned the dial, slowing its vibratory rate, then hastened it, to pick up the thought which had caused that loud mental sound. It must be a very powerful mind or a ray upon them with electrical augmentation. As he picked it up, they heard:

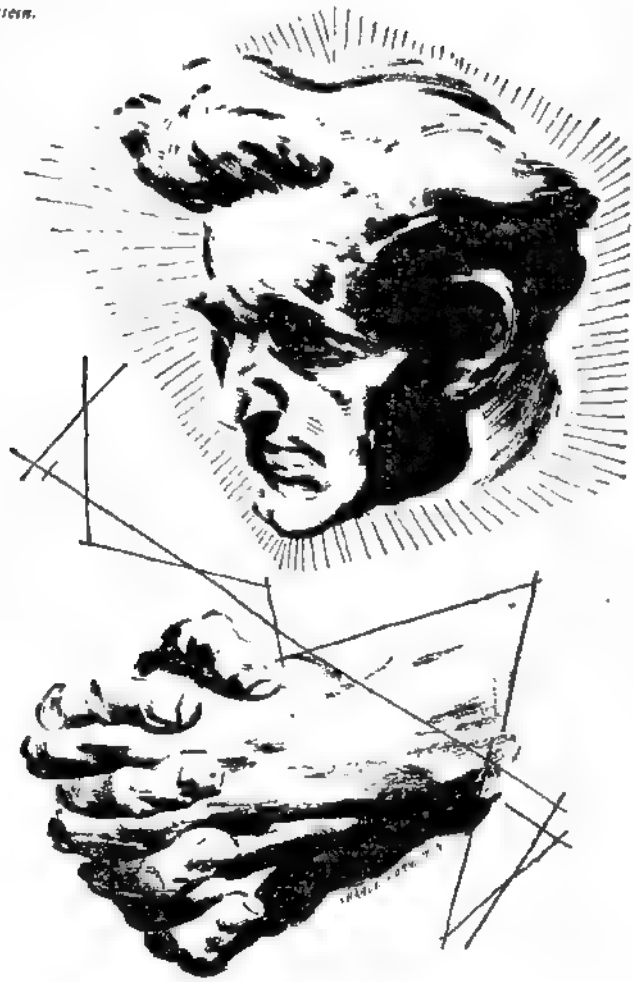
"You who trespass upon Vira! Know that you will never leave this planet except upon orders from the Three who Rule."

Tyron grinned at Saphele, for some reason, and she winked back. They were both sending out a strong thought of confidence, confidence that they could call down death upon "The Three" any time they wished. Not that they really felt confident—it was just ordinary tactics. Tyron mentally answered the message. "O Hidden Three, come out and I will personally teach you courtesy to visitors! Why do you hide yourselves? Are you afraid? Are you quite sure you are wise to attack the two great nations who sent us?"

The voice answered: "So, you threaten The Three? Learn, then, our power!" and with the voice came three great arms out of the wall, almost twenty feet away. Saphele gave one scream, and Tyron sprang to his feet. But the jointless arms, like three snakes, followed them unerringly, wrapped about them in quick coil upon coil. It was the living stuff of the walls itself, obeying the orders from the minds below. Its strength was immense. Twice Tyron tore the coil from him, stepped free, only to find it unerringly wrapping about him again. The old man sat calmly, and the great arm but rested on his shoulder, the tip trembling a little as it waited for resistance to show.

Then they heard the tramp of feet, and the distant doors swung open. A line of men marched in, their faces expressionless, their precision too exact to be called military. They were handsome men, tall and lithe and well formed, but they said not a word. Each of them bore a weapon which Tyron recognized as some kind of ray device. He ceased to struggle, and

Illustration by Charles Hornstein.



Menes

the arm relaxed, slipped away, glided into the wall, which quivered and swallowed it up. There was left no mark on the wall to show where the arms had been exuded.

The old man sat there, with his head now bowed in his hands. The soldiers formed a double line, their prisoners at the center, marched them off. Tyron put his arm about Saphele, whispering, "If our crews still aboard the ship don't spring a surprise on these bottle babies, I'll be surprised."

Saphele looked up into his grim broad face. She managed a little smile. "If you'd put your arm around

me a little oftener, I'd have more to remember when I'm lying in my grave."

Tyron smiled back, but it was a smile tinged with foreboding. "I wish I had used my time with you a little more profitably, dear tomboy. But if they do manage to do us in, I fear we'll never see a grave. They must get the basic protoplasm for these constructions from living creatures. That is what they mean to do with us."

Saphele grimaced. "Did you have to tell me that?"

"To hasten your woman's wit to work, my pretty. I've great faith in women. They rise to emergencies better than men, I've learned. That is, when they have a backbone, as you do."

If I could solve this riddle, I'd have done so already. How could we have stepped into such a mess thinking here was a sweet, harmless agricultural race of highly civilized people? How?"

"Assumptions based upon incomplete observation. Their grapes, so huge. Their control of the dinos. The boat-bird alone tells one much. The original race here must have been a very fine one. If we could but free them . . . I may find an ace up my sleeve, yet."

"Well pray don't think of it until the time comes to play it. You should not have mentioned it—now I will depend upon it."

AFTER descending endlessly in an elevator, they were marched along subterranean tunnels filled with machines so closely there was but a narrow aisle. They were not familiar types of machinery, but each one contained a living part, on the top or the side. A living brain and connected arm or arms for adjustments of controls. What they were all doing was hard to deduce. Some were handling metal working it into many shapes. Others were merely standing there and humming, enigmatically. Others were plastic manufacturing mechanisms, on which parti-colored stuff flowed and congealed into desired shapes. Still others were silent and long abandoned, which gave abundant evidence of the decline of this world's industry.

They came at last before the tribunal. Tyron had hoped to face his captors close up, giving some chance for a powerful man like himself to strike a blow. But the brains were not confident enough for that. They were placed before televisor receptors of great size, evidently erected for that purpose. The voice of the creatures gave no indication of their whereabouts, or even of their nature, for it was a mechanical voice, without tonal variation.

"Invaders from beyond the Barrier, you have met your conquerors. We mean to defend our lands from all who would take them. What have you to say in your defense?"

Tyron, at the first phrase, recognized the fixed mind which saw only what it wished to see, understood only what it wished to understand. He knew no words of his could help, but

tried anyway. "Gentlemen, we are not here as conquerors, but visitors, expecting the usual hospitality extended among all civilized peoples. We are in search of certain of our people who are lost. We have no business with you, no designs upon your lands, wish nothing but to go our way in peace."

"We do not believe you. We have already studied you from afar, we know what weapons you bear. How do you explain such powerful weapons if you are upon a peaceful mission?"

"They are only for our protection against unknown dangers," patiently explained Tyron, glancing at the walls for some aperture which would reveal where the things might lie in hiding. "We do not make war, except upon those who provoke us by unwise aggression. You are risking certain destruction by detaining us against our will, for our nations are many, and their strength is second to no other federation of worlds."

The eerie inhumanity of the voice of the thing in a glass container of nutrient solution which they knew could never be even remotely human in nature began to affect them. Saphele asked nervously, even though she did not want to mention them: "What have you done with the other members of our expedition?"

The voice answered at once, as if it had expected the question. "They are still making free of our world as if it were their own. But that will end soon."

"Do you treat all visitors so? Have you no concept of courtesy? Do you not recall how your creators treated visitors?" asked Saphele, her face showing a deep irritation, but her tones soft as silk.

Her questions caused a change in the voice, as if some other creature, listening, had suddenly interposed: "Do not mention our creators! They made us what we are, and we take our revenge upon all like them! You are like them, and you will suffer for their sins."

Tyron and Saphele stood silent, realizing now fully they were dealing with demented entities, not with rational beings. No matter what they said, such minds would but become more convinced of their own infallibility. After seconds that dragged into minutes, the voice came again, from some unseen aperture, or from an invisible ray creating thought waves near them: "Take them away, put them in the pens!"

Saphele looked appealingly at Tyron, for she knew he must carry concealed weapons, be able to put up formidable resistance if he wished. But he shook his head, and she knew he meant "Not yet."

They were marched out again, along similar long corridors filled with idle machines, attesting the once bustling industry of this place now falling into disuse.

The "pens" proved to be exactly that, rough timber pens like cattle enclosures, in which milled a horde of half-naked humans, all visibly in need of food and sanitation. Tyron grinned as Saphele was thrust in after him,

for she was holding her nose and retching with the odor. "Now you're up against the facts of life, Saphele! I would have thought a woman of your experience would have had a better stomach."

"If they think they can treat Peirans like this, they will learn differently! Perhaps Nortans can put up with such cruelty."

Tyron sobered as she turned her tongue against him, murmured: "You will learn something about Nortan reactions, my little spitfire."

An hour dragged by, they stood among the others, trying to understand their words, but failing. They were evidently a forest folk, for their few garments were of animal furs. Some of them still carried stone knives in their belts. Tyron guessed these were the last remnants of the original race, who had taken to hiding in the forests and were now being rounded up and destroyed by the rebellious minds.

MEANWHILE, the *Darkome* and her crew had grown tired of waiting for Saphele's return. Deciding that something was very wrong, Mion took the *Darkome* low over the trees, searching for Saphele's trail or for the little boy who had undertaken to guide her. They found the boy, still at work with his giant dino "tractor" and dragging platform. They watched the dull work of loading the uprooted vines on the platform. The workers seemed to be dispirited, working with slow weary movements . . . and it occurred to Mion that one does not uproot grape vines just to harvest a crop. He dropped the *Darkome* close to the great lizard again, called to the boy on his neck from the open lock. "Come over here and answer some questions, you rider of monsters."

The boy swung the huge thing half around, pressed the "stop" button and the thing froze with its long neck lifted close to the lock. The boy scrambled up the neck and jumped from the head to the lock. Mion slid shut the lock door, clamped it fast. Then he turned to the boy. "Look, little man, what did you do with the woman who went with you an hour or more ago?"

"Took her to the 'ministrators, what else?" he answered, eyeing the huge form of Mion with evident awe.

"And what and where is this administrators place?"

"It is the living palace of our former rulers, gigant. I'll bet you're pretty near as strong as my dino! Are you?"

Mion smiled, shook his head. "Never mind that, young one. You will be as big and strong some day. Now tell me, are your rulers apt to make us welcome or not? Why has Saphele not returned?"

"Nobody ever returns from the 'ministrators. I guess I should have told you before."

Mion, startled, said: "Yes, I think you should! Now explain quickly! Why does no one ever return?"

"Because they send them to the pens, and from there they go to the tanks. That's how they make new

things, from the tanks. You see, our rulers are crazy, nowadays."

"Crazy?" asked Mion mildly, not wanting to frighten the child, but boiling with sudden anger and realization of their peril.

"Yes, they're plain crazy. Imagine telling us to pull up the grape vines to get in the crop. They're all crazy. Used to be different, there were lots of us to do the work, and lots of time for fun, too. Now all we get is work, no fun, no holidays, no nothing. My pop even is crazy. He never says nothing! I wish you'd look at him and tell me what's wrong. Are you a doctor? I think they're all sick."

"Sounds like a bad epidemic, all right!" put in Elyse, taking it all in. "Perhaps we had better look at your father. Is he among the workers?"

The boy nodded, and Mion opened the lock door. The boy yelled out: "Come over here, Pop!"

One of the dully stumbling workers turned dumbly, ambled toward the ship. When he came alongside the flanks of the huge dinosaur beast, he stopped. Evidently climbing up was beyond him. Elyse motioned for one of the Peirans, who leaped upon a disk, glided out the big lock door, dropped down beside him. He stepped on willingly enough. The disk lifted him up beside them.

Mion examined him carefully. The boy kept asking: "See, he doesn't even talk! Just acts like a dino, without any brains. He does what you tell him, and that's all. He used to be a pretty darn good old man. Now look at him."

"What happened to make him like this?" asked Mion. To all exterior appearances the man looked normal, except for a dull eye and an almost nerveless skin that reacted not at all to his handling. Elyse left, saying: "I'll go over him with a penetray and see if there is not some mind lesion."

"They took him and all the others to the pens. They came back like this. Something the new rulers did to them," the boy explained, his little face filled with anxiety and hope that Mion could help. After some minutes Elyse spoke into Mion's mind, so that he alone could hear. "The mind is mutilated. There is nothing left of the man but his motor reflexes. Everything except the mechanical parts of the mind have been cut. He has left no more intelligence than a donkey."

A sudden rage filled Mion, for mind mutilation was the most despicable crime on the Nortan law books, for which the greatest punishments were dealt out. Death was not considered sufficient punishment, but those guilty were condemned to an equal mutilation. Justice demanded an eye for an eye in such cases.

Mion asked Elyse mentally: "Are the cut-off portions intact or destroyed? Can the connecting fibers be replaced or regrown, or is there nothing to be done."

Elyse answered: "Strong needle beneficial can regrow the connecting nerves in a few hours' treatment. The brain is not destroyed, only cut off."

"Very well. Take this man in and treat him. We must learn all we can

about the monsters doing this to these people. I'm not leaving here till we free these people!"

Elyse chuckled. "If you hadn't said that, I'd have asked for my freedom, so I could stay here and try alone to overcome them. Bravo! We're going to knock hell out of somebody for this."

"Now show me where this 'ministrator's place is, Gan-he-go! I'd have a talk with one of the 'ministrators of such government."

The boy nodded, and the *Darkome* glided off above the trees in the direction he pointed. They came to the curious structure into which Tyron and Saphele had gone, hung above it marveling. For its living nature, its existence as an animal entity, were far more apparent from above than from ground level.

"Is it an animal or a plant?" asked Mion of Gan-he-go.

The boy grinned. "All our houses were once like that! They grow from seed, so I guess they are really plants. But they eat garbage and plant-refuse. So I guess they are part animal."

Mion asked—"Where are the rest of the houses?"

The boy looked sadly at the untamed landscape, which gave little evidence of civilization. "They used to be everywhere, full of happy people. But the new rulers destroyed them. They said the houses made us too independent. Now we sleep in huts of branches in the forest. They will not let us gather the house seed and plant more houses. The only ones left are the big palaces, which are the ancient first houses. They can control those, and make them do what they want."

"They control the houses?" asked Mion. "You mean the houses can move?"

"Sure, they can put out arms and wait on their family. They can do almost everything. They are like a hundred servants."

Mion looked mystified. "I would like you to get me some of that house seed, Gan-he-go. I will pay you well for it."

The boy shook his head, his red hair tossing in ringlets. "It is forbidden. If I was caught getting the seed, they would make me like my Pop."

Mion said: "Perhaps before we go there will be an end of such doings. Then you must remember to get me some seed if I forget."

Elyse added in Mion's mind: "He is telling the truth, Lord Mion. Those houses are genuine plants. They do grow from seed, one chamber at a time, the other chambers budding off yearly. Each chamber has a self acting doorway, and can put out arms."

"It is something these wizards created, a new life-form!" Mion was enthusiastic. "We must get some of the seed. And we must take the eggs of that boat-bird with us. Think what the Peirans would do with these creations to inspire them to new research in life-moulding. We must learn these techniques before we depart."

"First free your wizards!" reminded Elyse.

Mion turned the boy over to the Peirans, cautioning them to watch him closely and keep him safe. Then he strode off to the control chamber and sent a penetray down into the huge rounded domes of the "house-plant" below. Inside he found the ancient skeletal form of Menes, sitting idly in the same chair in which he had interviewed Tyron and Saphele. He quickly picked the old ex-ruler's mind, learning in minutes what had occurred and what had become of Saphele. He was surprised to find Tyron too had been taken captive.

Then he sent a strong telaug beam down upon the house, ordering the "house" to open its doors. It responded readily, and Elyse, beside him, put another small beam upon old Menes, making him get up and walk out to them. A Peiran on a disk glided down, the old man, under control, seated himself upon the disk and was soon among them in the ship.

The old man was brought before Mion, where he sat at the control console, his screens giving him a view of the world beneath in all directions. The old man exclaimed in the native tongue, a tongue they were already nearly able to speak as it was so similar basically to their own Mantong: "You have come at last! Long have I prayed for deliverance!"

Mion smiled gently, his eyes narrowed and looking almost sleepy. "Yes, old one, we mean to free you if we can. So now tell us all we need to know to destroy these monstrous creatures who enslave you."

"I know, from reading the ancient records of our sources, what and who you are. You are from the League. There were no greater minds extant in the Elder times. I pray they are still paramount!"

Elyse put in: "Yes, dear Elder, they are. But there is no time—they have taken two of us already. Where is the heart of their strength? Where do we strike? And have they weapons to strike back? Why have they not fired on us?"

The old man shook his head sadly. "Their nests are deep in the fortress caverns. They are equipped with many weapons, perhaps as great as your own. You are far too close. They may strike at any time. I don't know why they have not tried to ray you yet. Perhaps they wait to make sure you will not be able to hurt them if they do strike at you."

Elyse glanced at Mion, who only smiled. "The screens are up, Elyse, have been since we neared this planet. Perhaps they have tried to ray us already, and not watching the detectors all the time I missed their tell-tale deviations It is possible they cannot even penetrate our screens enough to spy upon us, which would explain their taking of Tyron and Saphele."

"Let us put a ray down into the caves, and the old one here can point out to us where they lie in wait." Elyse suggested looking at Menes for consent. He nodded, and Mion switched on the biggest beam, swiveled the exterior nozzle downward, watched the big central screen as the

miles of rock beneath opened before the ray like misty air, air in which the mist swiftly dissolved as the rock took ionization from the force of the ray. The caverns beneath stood out as whiter streaks upon the gray rock background of the deeper rock, and the old man pointed toward one corner of the screen where the white streaks bunched together in a clot of chambers, one over the other. Mion swung the beam, increased the magnification, and they were looking suddenly at the pens where the hundreds of captives milled dumbly about, waiting for their death or worse. The huge form of Tyron stood out above the others by twice their height, and Mion could not resist whispering to him over the ray. "Ho, the mighty Tyron is penned up for the slaughter like a prize bull? How does it feel, great warrior?"

Tyron growled back. "Never mind the humor, Chief. These brains are old, recently gone demented; they may have plenty to throw at you. Don't let your confidence lead you into a death trap. Why have they let you put a ray in here? Why are their screens not up? It looks like a phony set-up! They are waiting for you to drop your guards and then, wham!"

Mion agreed with Tyron, and set the big ray searching for the authors of this world of science brought low, knowing that he was witnessing the end result of over-confidence in handling "lesser" minds.

He found them, finally, a sphere of force, through which dimly he could see the rows of great crystal globes, within which gurgled the pink nutrient fluids. Half concealed by the fluids, the vast chunks of brain tissue, grown thus for centuries to this vast size, lay. Mion guessed they were long overgrowing their crystal containers, for the flesh was pressed tightly against the glass at the bottom of the spheres, and there was only a small portion of the top where the fluid moved freely. They listened, as Mion turned up the augmentation, to the thinking of these creatures of mind alone, and heard a complicated mixture of curious egotism as there were a dozen of the vast growths in the big cavern. They were surrounded by the apparatus of their culture medium, pumps pulsed and retracted in batteries, great cleaning filters where the pink fluid was aerated and where new nutrients were added stood in banks by the walls.

"A fragile mess of glass to ride to oblivion . . ." muttered Mion, almost absently. He glanced at Elyse, who murmured: "You should not have spoken, I suspect such minds are extremely sensitive to vibration and will sense our presence, even though the transmission tubes are not operating."

A ray came suddenly into the bow from the side, and a voice they recognized as Nortan reported: "We're waiting for orders in the *Adventure*, Lord Mion. Shall we attack?"

Mion ordered: "Follow my penetray to their center below, and watch developments. Don't attack unless it looks as if the *Darkome* can't handle them. I don't want them firing on that

old ship of yours and crippling her.'

A Peiran voice cut from the *Adventure*. "I think you'd be surprised Lord Mion We've tried out some of the ancient weapons, and they are potent"

"All the better to hold them as an ace in reserve. Wait till they show their hand."

"Then we'll top it!" piped the Peiran, and Mion could not help smiling as he turned back to listening to the great minds in their crystal globes below. These Peirans were irrepressible, the most serious occurrences only seemed to stimulate them

The strange involved thought went on and on, several minds thinking rapidly in contact, like one vast mind. They were considering the dangers from the strange ships above, and their thought contained detailed descriptions of the interiors of the two ships, so Mion knew their penetrative rays were of an advanced type able to pierce the force screens of the *Darkome*. He waited to fire only to make sure nothing of the wisdom that had built this world would be lost by their destruction.

"Above, the enemy, in strange ships of great power. Yet we captured two without resistance. How do you explain that?"

"Low creatures in stolen craft . . ." one of the minds answered. "We shall entice them out of their craft and then we shall have their ships for our own."

Mion wondered what had become of the space craft he knew these people must have been able to build once. He insinuated the question into the minds as abstract thought, indistinguishable from their own thought. One of the minds automatically considered the question and answered it. 'Destroyed to keep our slaves from escaping us, of course."

"Better to fire upon them and destroy them now, before they learn our whereabouts and perhaps destroy us!"

"Better to wait and keep silent, let them come out of their craft to search for us, catch them helpless."

So the minds debated, and Mion waited, wondering just how to render them helpless without destroying them, so he could learn from them when they were helpless.

Elyse put her hand upon a heat ray, her eyes pleading upon Mion's to let her use it, but he shook his head. "Try plain shorter If it renders them helpless we know how to take them over intact."

Elyse swung a shorter beam into action. It lanced down like an arm of the night itself, and the glowing force screen about the great crystal globes paled, almost disappeared. But a relay sprang shut somewhere, and a row of dynamos hummed and whined into action, the force screen glowed quickly into brilliance again.

Mion growled. "Now they know we've found them. It was a mistake. We could have crippled them as well. Put a force beam on their screen, try overloading the circuits, maybe 'twill blow out."

The thought from the mind globes was suddenly confused, strident with

alarm as they called upon each other to resist the attack. A ray sprang up toward them—a blue ray which Mion recognized as some type of dissociator. He had no wish for such a ray to strike the *Darkome's* screens, for even though the screens absorbed it, it would pit the hull, perhaps injure some inside. He touched the source of the beam with the shorter. It blinked out. Then he cut savagely at the same point with his own disbeams, swung the shorter away briefly to make sure he had cut the power source cables. The ray remained inactive.

Tyron, in the pen, sensed the vibrations of the rays active so closeby, and began to cast about for a way to make his weight felt. For his massive strength, the rough timber barricades of the pen were none too strong. He seized an upright, a six-by-six timber, placed adjacent to the others as the bars of the pen At top and bottom the timbers were bolted to exterior horizontals. The only way he could get the upright off was to tear it from the bolts by main strength. Bracing his feet, with his back bent like a bow, he heaved against the lower part of the timber. The bolt screeched in its socket, seemed to sink into the wood. He heaved again, and again. Each time the head of the bolt sank deeper into the wood, seemingly more hopelessly embedded. But not to Tyron's eyes. He kept heaving, waiting till his strength returned, then heaving again. Each time the bolt head sank deeper out of sight, At last he heard the wood tearing, and fell back from the barricade with the end of the timber in his hands. He had torn the timber from the bolt by main strength.

With this in his hands, he made short work of enlarging the opening, using the heavy timber as a pry. Soon he was charging down the cavern, the bulk of the prisoners following his lead, hundreds strong.

Tyron's eyes picked out an opening he knew should lead into a ray turret, or dome. He bounded into the passage, and hand-over-handed up the ladder which should, if this were a Nortan installation, lead to the weapon rooms over the engine and manufacturing borings. He was right, but as he charged into the series of chambers where the big ray generators hummed, he found dozens of uniformed warriors present, each bent over the sighting screen of a penetrative ray. The object he saw on the screen above each weapon he knew was the *Darkome*

Tyron did not wait on ceremony. As the nearest of the uniformed men looked up at the sound of his steps, his hand going to the side-arm on his hip, Tyron left his feet in a long dive, sweeping the warrior from his seat and crushing him beneath his weight. But he did not wait. As he felt the man go limp under him, he gained his feet, swung the body of the man in a long arc to crack his head against the next one at his post. There were ten in that chamber when Tyron entered, and though several of them managed to get out their side-arms and fire on him, so swift was

his attack that not one of them got a bolt into his body, though his clothing was burnt through in several places.

Piling the unconscious and mangled men in a heap in the center of the chamber, Tyron beckoned on the throng still toiling up the ladders from below. Saphele busied herself disarming and binding the unconscious men, and Tyron swung one of the weapons in a swift search for other ray turrets.

Picking off several other nearby ray turrets with diffuse ray that swept them clean of life in one sudden blast of destructive power, Tyron swung his ray swiftly downward, searching for the nest where he knew the brains of this place must shelter. The dumb, strange slowness of the warriors he had knocked from their seats had told Tyron they were but mutilated slaves of control ray, and he knew they were not really responsible for their actions. He caught the glowing lance of the *Darkome's* rays in his sighting screen, swung swiftly on the trail thus blazed, found the crystal globes in which the brain tissues, long overgrown their original functions, still sheltered their bodiless existence.

Saphele spoke from her own ray she had swung into action beside him: "There they are, the authors of all this nonsense. Why not kill them quickly, and save ourselves further trouble?"

"I'm going to, before the *Darkome* tells us they want them for study or some such foolishness."

Even as Tyron sighted his ray on the nearest and biggest of the mental spheres, a ray from the *Darkome* came in to him, a big voice called: "Hold it, Captain, I want those brains for what they can tell us!"

Tyron groaned in anguish. "One split second more and you'd have had them for tomorrow's hash! What do you mean, study? Those things can't tell you anything you don't know already!"

But the rulers of the Vi-ans had not begun to fight yet. As Tyron turned away, a dozen bolts from as many sources smashed into his turret, cutting the power cables and even slicing the gymbals on which they swiveled so that several heavy mounted ray fell. The place was a wreck less than a second after Tyron refrained from firing on the brains. As he scrambled away down the ladders with Saphele leading him by several feet, he could only wonder how they missed killing them both.

They dashed through the dumbly milling released prisoners, too mindless to help themselves, and scrambled up the next well leading to another gun turret. As they swung new rays into action, they saw the *Darkome* had knocked out the rays that had fired upon them. Again the brains seemed helpless and at their mercy.

"Now, by the grace of the Devil, I'm cutting those cells off from all . . ." Tyron began slashing at the innumerable cables and wires and glass tubes of fluid leading into the rows of spheres. But somewhere in the endless warrens below them a master switch clanged over, and the power

in their rays vanished.

Saphele cried: "So brilliant a people would have self-contained power in their weapons, one would think."

Tyron stood helpless, blind now that the telescreens over the ray-cannon were blank and black. There was no way of knowing what was happening without power.

Saphele, more cool and self-reliant than Tyron in the emergency, slammed down the cover over the well up which they had climbed, bolted it down. Then she turned to one of the big ray-mech, began swiftly removing the screws of the casing.

"Why?" asked Tyron, watching her feverish activity skeptically. "Looking for something you lost?"

"Looking for the power source that should be in here. Such a race as this never designed weapons that could be inactivated from one central point."

"They would have done so if they wanted to be able to keep their own people from firing on them, as is now the case," commented Tyron, falling to with her to slide off the heavy protective casings.

"There should be a transfer switch, to change from central power to Thyron power . . ." muttered Saphele.

Tyron grunted: "The switch should be out in the open, where it could be used quickly in an emergency, not hidden beneath all this metal!"

"The new rulers removed the switches after their successful rebellion!" cried Saphele. "And here are the connections where they removed the exterior switch!"

Tyron seized the wires, quickly connected them to each other, listened with grateful ears as the small dynamos inside hummed into action. They scrambled from beneath the big mechanism, to watch the screens above the ray-barrel come to life, reveal again the distant rows of spheres in which the great bodiless minds nestled in their fluids. But all they saw was a wall of gray vibrant force.

"They've raised a force screen," growled Tyron, "and it looks like a powerful one, with all the power in these caverns concentrated in it."

"It can't have more power than is contained within it!" objected Saphele, her pretty face now smudged and dirty, her eyes dark with anxiety.

"It looks like a mile or so wide, and no telling how deep. It probably surrounds the whole central power installation."

"It is what Mion wanted them to do!" Saphele smiled with relief. "Now they can't take down their screen without being killed, and they can't fire upon us through it; it's not that kind of screen. All Mion has to do is take over, and keep his guns trained on the screen until it goes off. Then he's got them! If I know Mion, he'll haul up all the dynamos in the place and put up another perma-screen around them, seal them off in there till they die."

"Mightn't be a bad idea . . ." murmured Mion's voice in her ear, and Saphele laughed, for neither of them would know now which was reading which or who conceived the plan they

adopted.

"From their performance, Mion,' growled Tyron, hearing the ray from the *Darkome* speaking to Saphele. "I'd say those brains weren't worth bothering with, and the real brains of this place will be found in such characters as Menes. Those things were mere aids to the mechanical installations, not minds in their own right."

"They're very old, Tyron," answered Mion. "It is not so much that they created anything, but that they remember the days when this place was built up. I want those life-processes. How did they create the living house in which Menes dwells? I must know that."

"I'll wager a cubic yard of Peiran coins that when you learn those secrets, you'll learn them from an old human like Menes, and not from the bottled brains."

"Can't take a chance, Tyron." responded Mion. "How about rounding up a crew of natives, perhaps those prisoners you were penned up with, and starting the construction of a force sphere around the Vi-an rulers. No telling when they'll try to knock us off, we've got to be ready."

(To be concluded)

WHO IS MYSHKIN?

Could it be that he is Boris Borisovitch Simeonof-Pishtchik?

He LOOKS like Boris—but Boris is so *small!*

Time called it "The Mad Myshkin Affair"—perhaps because they regarded Boris in the same way Siegman did: an illusion. But Gladys, who even made roosters crow when she walked by, thought he was *just darling.*

DARLING* MYSHKIN—who could kill a dozen men and get away with it, *because it wasn't a crime!

Now how could that be? Should the question be changed from *who* to

WHAT IS MYSHKIN?

March 3, 1953—that's the day you'll find out!

Special Features

THE MAN from TOMORROW

Nebulosities

Personals

About Our Front Cover

About Our Back Cover

Letters

Other Worlds Book Shelf

THIS special section of OTHER WORLDS is for your own participation and enjoyment. Here you will find your letters to the editor; your jokes (for which we will pay $1 each); your personal messages to your fellow readers (published free); reviews of science fiction books worthy of your attention; the latest news of what's going on in the world of authors, editors, rival magazines, fan clubs, even individual readers; your bookshop; cartoons; fact articles; interviews with individuals in the public eye and many others. If you have any suggestions as to improvements and additional features, remember your word is our golden rule.

The Man from TOMORROW

ACCORDING to the history books of a world five hundred years yet unborn, the year 1953 stands out in a number of ways. Perhaps it stands out most for its reputation as "The Year of Change" in the course of American History. Actually, the events of the year were not particularly spectacular, and to the people living in that year (and many years afterward) there was no special significance to the events which they participated in; no special trend toward the pattern of their tomorrow Yet, in looking backward, the truth was apparent that the appellation "change" was peculiarly applicable to that year alone.

For one thing, it was the dawn of a new political era. In January of that year a new political setup came into power. There were many who said it was *not* a new setup at all, but the same old gang in power. There were many charges of "gangsterism," and there was a growing cry for electoral change. No one liked the way the new government had been selected Agitation for change in the party system, the convention-nominating system, the policy of electoral voting rather than majority voting, became outspoken. But there was little done (at the time) although many believed they had actually not been allowed to have any part in the installation of the ruling government. It was only apathy in action that frustrated vigor in thought. The thought, however, existed, and it planted the seed for future events which came to be dated from 1953.

The government of 1953 was the first of the *true* War Governments. It was dedicated (for all time) to war. It was dedicated in principle to the absolute necessity of continual warlikeness. It was dedicated to the principle that tremendously increasing "standards" of living could only be possible through tremendous and constant nervous pressure engendered by continual threat of danger. It was dedicated on the principle that the average man would not put forth effort unless driven to it. It was made *necessary* by the fact that civilization had finally coddled its members to ineffectiveness, general inability, general physical and mental weakness

Man had reached the point where

he did not understand with his mind the things his hands were doing. He could not penetrate beyond the "dashboard" of his car, beyond the buttons and meters that cloaked the "science' that ran his machine in mystery. Man at last had become a mental slave to a robot, had become dependent and therefore vulnerable; the machine was his master, although he did not yet realize it. But it began to be evident in 1953 in a number of ways.

Insanity became the number one disease of the nation. One out of every three persons was a psychopath in one way or another. There were an astounding number of split-personality abberations; a lesser but no less stupendous (in its implication) number of psycho-somatists. In subconscious fear of the machine, the human body developed a variety of ailments that could not be penetrated by medicine, but which were well known to psychiatrists, (although with an equal futility of action).

Production, ever driven upward, did climb, but its rate of climb was always tapered off by incompetence. No man did the best he could. He no longer even tried to do the best he could. He was not even taught to do the best he could. Instead he thought in terms of hours, in terms of recompense based on hours. Actual production had no share in the picture he devised of the parity between his effort and his recompense. And because of this thinking, he gave no credit to his hands. He had no interest in training them—for of what use was training to competence directed by intelligence when all that was necessary was learning a certain series of motions by rote!

Man, dependent more and more on his machines, understood them less and less.

1953 saw "social" change become the paramount issue. The idea of 'group social" interests began to predominate. Individuality was breathing its last. There was no place in the frankenstein-age the machine had introduced for an individual. The great god of the era to come was the "cog." The wheel within a wheel. The "part of the whole" which could never in itself be a whole.

Realization of this brought on the wave of psychic fear which began to undermine the mental health of the nation.

The necessity of this new "social" change made it primarily necessary to "equalize" the existing variance in "status" all over the world. Vastly predominant in the government's interests became the business of eradicating racial, sectional, national lines. Even religions came in for their share of political leveling. The cry, on the surface, seemed to be one of noble purpose, like that of Lincoln in the war to "free the slaves." We were determined not to live "half free and half slave." And so we marched from that condition into one of *all* slave—but no one realized that was the direction of the march, until too late. The underprivileged groups did not realize that they were being jelled into a mass of equal opportunity from which *all* opportunity would eventually be

purged.

No one realized the machine was to blame. All blamed the selfish interests of other groups than theirs. Labor fought management and government in an effort to buy the things the machine produced. Management fought labor and government in order to make a profit on what the machine produced. Government quietly tied the hands of both in an effort to distribute what the machine produced. The machine became the government.

Any individuality was suppressed because it "endangered the machine." The hideous prospects of a "machine breakdown" terrified the world into continued acceptance, and continual abandonment of all efforts to "escape" the machine

Growing population reduced to nil the one chance that many thought existed to flee the machine. These individuals found their wastelands gradually being invaded by the machine, until, surrounded on all sides, they surrendered to the inevitable.

Progress became a highway, rammed through your living room by the right of eminent domain There was no escape.

In 1953 Nature fought with Man. His machine had begun to encroach on her domain. Atomic energy, expressed in the bomb—and in the ever bigger bomb—applied tiny prods to her ribs, and was responded to by gigantic convulsions. Two things dominated the year—volcanoes and earthquakes.

In 1953 seventy per cent of the Earth's workers worked mightily to produce the weapons of war.

In 1953 six million Americans went mad.

In 1953 disaster became the perpetual comrade of Man.

In 1953 the dissemination of news became so stereotyped that each morning's news might just as well have been a "recording" of the previous morning's news.

In 1953 the "story of the year" was the suspicion that the heads of the Russian government possessed the secret of longevity, of a means to live for several hundred years. Stalin was said to be a "double" by many who refused to believe there was any truth to the rumor of the serum that made him stop aging. From Russia itself came dramatic proof of the falsity of the longevity rumor by the deaths through age of a half-dozen high Russian officials. These deaths came in quick sequence, and touched off a wave of jitters as rapid changes in Soviet inner circles made predicting future Russian acts highly problematical.

In 1953 taxes went up again!

But in spite of it all, the average man looked with awe on his achievements. He pointed to his civilization with exultance and pride. He pointed out that no other civilization had ever attained such a peak, and he pointed toward the certainty that the future was assured, and that progress would continue its upward zoom.

Pride rode his shoulders like the old man of the sea—and he did not realize that of all the wonders around

him, none were of his own production. He did not suspect the "specialists" behind it all, into whose hands he had thrown his self-reliance. He did not become aware of the existence of the high-priesthood of the machine, themselves unwitting slaves because of their overweening pride.

Man, who had created the machine, first with his mind, then with his hands, and finally with lip service, became its dupe. Willingly in 1953 he exposed himself to The Change. And even if he had foreseen it, he could not have held it back.

Editorial

(Concluded from page 5)

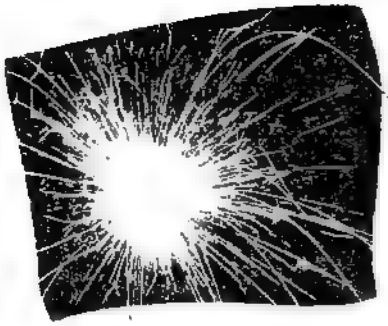
we were out in the garden picking lima beans. It took about an hour to pick a pailful. Then it took another hour to shell them. And when we'd finished, we had the equivalent of two large cans from the local tea store. One of our civilized, mechanized friends pointed out that we could have bought those two cans for 28c, already cooked and ready to eat. He also pointed out we could have written 28 words in something like one minute and earned the same amount. And that in two hours we could have written better than 3300 words, and made $33.00 at our own word-rate, and if we sold it to Howard Browne's new *Fantastic,* as much as $132.00. Thus, our certain loss was $32.72, and our possible loss was $131.72.

There are two harsh words for that. One is regimentation, the other is greed. There are other words: intimidation, conformation, imitation, common-sense, the-thing-to-do.

That's what we mean about OTHER WORLDS' future. We're going to pick beans, if we WANT TO. We're going to do what we *like* to do, not something we don't like to do—like sitting on nails because other people sit on nails. Sitting on nails doesn't sound comfortable to us, and we're sure it wouldn't make us happy. Nor would the attention we get thereby make us happy. We refuse to sit on nails just because they are made of gold!

And does that give you any idea of what 1953 will have in store for you in OTHER WORLDS? Anyway, that's as close as we can come to predicting something utterly unpredictable.

Rap.



Nebulosities

Vaporings from the mind of the editor; random gas explosions; atmospheric bits of the gaseous envelope of Other Worlds; including hot air from the nebulae of faithful readers; offered for the next to nothing it is worth. Your contributions are welcome—anything might serve to start the editor gassing.

WE'D like to talk about science. From way back. Back as far as Glub, the caveman, the first human to have an itch to know what made things work. Strangely enough, he hit on the scientific method—trial and error. And sadly enough, he began the first of the series of errors known today as "knowledge." Having noted (like a rather famous man to come upon the scene much later in history) that apples fell from trees, he wondered about it, and wondered if there wasn't something that made apples fall from trees. So he picked up a stone and threw it into the tree, and discovered that stones can cause apples to fall from trees. It was an accidental discovery. It was one of those "events" which shake history. At least it shook Glub; because the stone came down too, hit him on the head, and knocked him unconscious. It is too bad that he did not remain unconscious, because when he awoke, he had formulated the first scientific "theory" from observation and experiment: Apples fall from trees because stones hit them. Stones hit them because they are thrown. Sometimes the same stones return to hit the thrower, causing the sun to go out. And therefore, since apples are observed to fall without stones or throwers visible, there must be invisible stones and invisible throwers—and lastly, sometimes they hit back, which makes the thing a dangerous experiment to perform, and the performer is brave, and deserves a medal, and certainly a position of prestige over his fellows.

Ever since, scientists have insisted on that last position. They have devised a system to make it exclusive, by alphabetic juggling, through a discriminating process of elimination called "college education" with the resulting conferment of letters of the alphabet which they are entitled to

wear behind their names, designating the special field of science in which they are now an "authority."

The net result of this procedure eliminates any further possibility of any dope "accidentally" striking it rich in the field of knowledge as did Glub. For if he does come up with a theory, he is scanned rapidly for his alphabetical decorations, and lacking them, is bestowed with the prize label of them all—crackpot. Who is this illiterate boob, they will ask with a condescending sneer; what letter of the alphabet does he wear?

Maybe you think we're sneering at scientists? How wrong! We are merely pointing out that a degree doesn't make a scientist, neither does a paper scroll qualify as knowledge. For that matter a book cannot "know" anything, being only paper, which is inanimate. We have too many self-labeled scientists running around, all of them bearing bundles of books which they thrust out at all critics, loudly declaiming "authority." The REAL scientist is the one who does not possess a single book—the one who carries his KNOW HOW in his noodle. Theory is for the birds. Ability to DO is knowledge. Why can't scientists refrain from drawing conclusions from their experiments? Inevitably these conclusions must be wrong, since they *are* fiction; and the chances against a fiction coinciding with a truth are infinitely remote.

Knowledge is know-how; all else is philosophy. For those who point out that know-how can be gotten from books, they are merely hedging. Reading a book will not DO a single thing. And the part of the book which tells of the invisible thrower and the invisible stone and the sun going out cannot contribute to knocking down the apple.

Our scientific books are crammed full of such crud. Worse still, they are crammed full of insufficient observation and experiment, all done under *specific* conditions and therefore worthless under *generic conditions*.

An example: A physics textbook of 1930 will inform you with a great deal of assurance that the Earth's atmosphere extends out a maximum of 600 miles; and that the higher you go, the colder it gets, until at the outermost limits you reach absolute zero, or as close to it as can be attained in other than a complete vacuum. It also defined the complete vacuum as a reality, and named it ether. They gave nothing a name. Today, the atmosphere is known to extend at least 18,000 miles out, and that even then, the ether is far from empty; and that there are bands of temperature which range from 60° below at ten miles, to 180° above at 50 miles, to 2000° above at 1800 miles, and even to 18,000° above at 18,000 miles. In between are the most fantastic ups and downs of temperature. We learn too, that these temperatures are not really temperatures, but molecular motion in such rarefied mediums as to almost be a vacuum—in which you could place your hand and not even be singed. You could

(Concluded on page 159)

personals

A club called THE SPACEWARPERS has been formed in Calif. For information, write Charles Nuetzel, 16452 Moorpark St, Encino, Calif . . . *THE PENDULUM; bi-monthly; 15c, 2/25c; 23 page mimeo zine, fiction, articles, poetry and cartoons. Bill Venable, 610 Park Place, Pittsburgh 9, Penna* . . . For sale or trade: pb "Did She Fall" Thorne Smith; TWS, Oct '50; SFQ, Feb. '52; FFM, Oct '50; pb "Kidnapped," R. L. Stevenson; Rachel Field's "X m a s Time"; A. Bennett's pb "Buried Alive"; "Arabian Nights" in excel condit, pub 1919; A. Raymond's "Fiery Desert of Mongo"; "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," H. G. Wells, 1917 ed in excel condit, spine slightly faded; "The Echo Fall" 1929 nonstf poetry zine. David A. Bates, 840 Asylum Ave, Hartford, Conn . . . *Would like pen pals any age, and wants to hear from New England fans interested in forming a club. Write David Bates, address above, or Ronald D. Rentz, 130 Vera St, West Hartford, Conn* . . . BREVIZINE; 10c, 3/25c; 30 to 35 pages, mimeo; fiction, poetry, articles and news. Fantasy Pocketbooks, Warren Freiberg, 5018 W. 18th St, Cicero 50, Ill . . . *Wanted: Galaxy issues 1 to 15. Must be in good condition. State price. Pete De Paola, 2109 Regent Place, Brooklyn 26, NY* . . . A CHECKLIST OF FANTASTIC MAGAZINES; photo-offset; contains date, volume and number of 167 fantasy magazine titles. Covers about 3500 issues from 11 countries. $1, from Bradford M. Day, 127-01 116 Ave, S. Ozone Park 20, NY or Raymond Isadore, 1907A S. 14 St, Milwaukee 4, Wisc . . . *For sale: Galaxy Oct & Nov '50, Feb & Aug thru Dec '51, Jan., Feb, Apr & May '52; July & Sept '50 and Dec '51, OW; Jan & Mar '52 Madge. 35c plus 5c postage. Would like copies of White's "Witch in the Wood" and "The Ill-Made Knight" in good condition. Mrs. R. Bolton, 5533 Worth, Dallas, Tex* . . . Would like to correspond with girls and boys about 15 years old, interested in science and science-fiction. Ed Addeo, 1949 E. 29 St, Brooklyn 29, NY . . . *Am starting a stf fanzine entitled THE COSMIC FRONTIER and need fifty subscribers before I can begin. Zine will have at least 16 pages of good stories and articles. Price will be $1/12, issued monthly. S. K. Nock, RFD 3, Castleton, VY* . . . Have been corresponding with Carol Kirchbloom, but recently letters come back marked no such person living there. Can

anyone notify me of her whereabouts? Jack Feinberg, 1954 E 29th St, Brooklyn, NY . . . *We're publishing a fanzine this fall and need illos, stories and articles. You amateurs send in your work, it doesn't have to be professional. Any pointers from other faneds will be appreciated. Mark Rose and David MacDonald, 135-09 Jewel Ave, Flushing 67, NY* . . . Wanted: AS Jan, Feb, Mar & May '52; FA Mar & Feb. '52. For sale: 10 Story Fantasy, Spr '51, 20c; Future, Jan, Mar & May '52, 15c ea; FFM, Dec. '51, 20c; Suspense, Summer '51, 30c; include 5c postage for each 2 mags. All in perfect condition except 10 Story Fantasy has rip in cover. Alfred Perez, 2646 Harrison St, Oakland 11, Calif . . . *Johnny Clark, 930 W San Antonio St, Lockhart, Texas, would like to correspond with teen-age fans. Would also like to buy pre '46 aSF at reasonable prices* . . . Would like to correspond with someone. Anyone interested? Bill Turpie, 376 24th St. Santa Monica, Calif . . . *Joseph Miller, 749 Merchants Rd, Rochester, NY has out-of-print books by E. R. Burroughs for sale. Write for list and prices* . . . Wanted: All E. R. Burroughs in hardcover books, PBs, mags. All stories by Otis Kline, Edmond Hamilton (espec Cap Future) and Robert E. Howard. Back issues of Strange Adventures, Mystery in Space and Tarzan comic books. Have "Tarzan's Quest," "Tarzan and the Lion Man," and "The Chessman of Mars" for sale. Steve Pierson, 16 Craigmoor Rd, West Hartford, Conn . . . *Have: FSQ, Spr 50 and Sum '51; SS, Jan, May & Nov '48; TWS, Apr & Oct '48, Apr, Aug & Oct '49, Aug '47, Dec '46 & Feb '50; SuSS, Apr '51; Out of This World, Dec '50; PS, Sum '50; FA, Mar '52; AS, June '52; OW, Apr '52. Would like to trade for: Cap Future, Win '39, Sum, Fall & Win '41, Spr & Fall '42, Spr, Sum, Fall & Win '43; SS, Spr '45, Fall and Win '46. Larry Ketcham, Waterford, Calif* . . . PITTSBURGH FANS: Pittsburgh Science Fiction Association (LEhigh 1-0318) wants members an l is interested in forming local clubs in surrounding area. Phone above number or write Donald Susan, c/o Dirce Archer, 1453 Barnsdale St, Pittsburgh 17, Penna . . . *To sell or trade: "World of Null-A," van Vogt; "Beyond This Horizon," Heinlein; "What Mad Universe," Brown. Joseph C. Belotte, 2705 15th St, Troy, NY* . . . For sale: "Journey to Infinity," "Bset Stf Stories: 1951," "Big Book of Stf," "Treasury of Stf," "Omnibus of Time," "Silverlock," "Voyage of the Space Beagle," & "Rocketship Galileo." All in mint condition. Gary Pickersgill, Box 270, Sheldon, Iowa . . . *Does anyone want to sell the following AS: Jan. '32 (Tumithak of the Corridors), Feb, Mar & Apr '32 (Troyana) at a reasonable price? Helen Hirst, Twin Firs Handcraft, Rt 5, Box 1191, Vancouver, Wash* . . . Any fan in the San Francisco Bay area interested in joining a stf & rocket club please call JU 7-4431 or JU 5-7305. Also want pre '49 aSF; British stf; AS

(Concluded on page 159)

ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

(Based on a long novel with scarcely any words)

Not Quite By

Howard Browne

THIS is a sad story. It will make your heart bleed. It made ours bleed! Anyway, a long time ago —longer than most editors are willing to remember, and therefore they don't, but we do—we conceived the idea of an all-editor issue. You've had that issue. But as part of it, we had a cover painted by H. W. McCauley, which was to illustrate the *piece de resistance* of the special issue, a brand new Tharn novel by Howard Browne. Howard said he'd do it. But he never did! And do you know why?

Well, first, Howard is a big man. So big he moves slowly. Which we expected. Just before deadline, we asked him for results. He said he'd lock himself in a hotel room and produce results. Perhaps he locked himself in a hotel room, and perhaps also he lost the key; because he apparently never emerged. At least, with the Tharn novel. Perhaps also, he found the room already occupied, and perhaps she was more lovely than OTHER WORLDS. Perhaps . . .

So we cancelled the deadline. We made new ones. Repeatedly. For more than two years. Then in despair, we ran the issue without him. Because if we'd waited longer, all those other swell stories by other editors would have been out-dated.

No, it wasn't exactly Howard's fault. Things kept turning up. Like the new FANTASTIC, that fabulously successful new slick stfantasy-detective-mystery magazine. Like the new AMAZING we hear is about to appear. Like that dame in the hotel room. (We hate her!)

But we *do* like Howard's editorial work, and since that is his alibi, we'll let him have it. And now, in sheer despair, giving up our hopes at last (we'd hoped for an *all* Howard Browne issue!) we are running the cover.

No story. Just the cover. What's it all about? Who's the pretty gal on the tree limb with the fascinating black kitty? What's going on with Tharn and the Lost Atlanteans? Who will eventually die beneath the claws of the black kitty? Where is Tharn? And why is the beautiful girl in the green bathing suit eating out her heart for him? *Has* he no heart! Doesn't he know how nice she is?

But we do have this—she makes a nice cover, she and her kitty! We hope you like our Tharnless cover, and our Browneless issue.

But all the same, it is sad.

ABOUT OUR BACK COVER

Painted By

Hannes Bok

ARTISTS are generally accepted to be strange people. Some of them are stranger than others. But most of them are strange only because the people who profess to love art, as watchers rather than doers, make them seem strange in the light of their own antics.

There have been many artists with a sense of humor. These have played little "jokes" on their admirers, by painting something absolutely silly, and then watching their followers gush over it, pretending they "understood" what the artist was trying to convey.

But there are some artists who paint very bizarre things with no regard whatever as to what the onlooker is going to think or say about it. These artists have a very high sense of beauty, color, symmetry and visual expression of such inexpressible things as emotions, philosophies, inner meanings. Hannes Bok is one of these artists.

It has always been a requisite of this artist that he be given a free hand, that he be allowed to illustrate the scene or the story in his own way, with his own interpretation. Almost never has he been given permission to do so. It is his one complaint, but being a level-headed (and sometimes hungry) individual, he has always acceded to necessity, and painted (to a certain degree!) the way he was expected to.

But not for OTHER WORLDS. Never has he painted or illustrated a single story with a single requirement from the editorial staff. As a result, the painting on the back cover this month was painted a long time ago for a front cover, and then never placed there because it just didn't fit. Unless it could be presented without any disturbing titles, logos, layout, it was not the beautiful thing he had painted. Thus, it had to wait until our present policy of full-color back cover paintings came along. We think you will appreciate our tolerance toward the "whim" of an artist. For Hannes Bok is true to his artistic temperament, and whatever anyone may say about his work, they cannot say it is not his! We are sure you'll like this, and future Bok paintings, done with nothing guiding him but his own inner mind, his own instincts toward beauty, and his own desire to express himself as he sees himself, deep down where he lives his secret life.

We think it's a beautiful life. And a beautiful painting.

LETTERS

CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY 806 DEMPSTER STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Jon Gardner

Your October issue of OTHER WORLDS was most interesting. First, the stories.

THE NAKED GODDESS, while quite a mixture of characterization changes, was an entertaining enough tale for the lead novel. But I feel strongly that Byrne has turned out better and can do so in the future. How about it? Let's not stop at "excellent" when an author is quite capable of doing "super-excellent."

The cover for THE NAKED GODDESS was . . . WOW!! . . . I spent almost as much time looking at the cover as I did reading the story.

FEARLESS FERGY, while well-written, did not rouse any great response in me. A neatly-turned filler, that's all.

THE SUN SMITHS by Shaver was excellent. I haven't read any of his stuff since the "mystery" stories but his style, tho it seems the same to me, is much smoother and more interesting. Just one word of comment; too much description concerning the science behind the mechs is apt to slow his type of story down a fraction too much. Otherwise, fine. I'm looking forward with great interest to his next serial. Shaver did create many fascinating characters in his mystery series and I would enjoy meeting these personalities again strictly in an entertainment-type tale with little stress on anything else but entertainment.

LAST MINUTE was absolutely the *best* piece of stf satire I've ever read, and I've been wading through this stuff for twelve years now. That story, my friend, was a masterpiece! Something like this every now and then would be most welcome.

L. Sprague de Camp's article, LOST CONTINENTS No. 1, interested me insofar as the statistical side of the matter is concerned. I haven't read his book so don't know how he broadens out (if he does) and so will reserve comments on this until later. However, the maps of Atlantis from Plato and Kircher are almost completely inaccurate. I am one of "those people" who happened to be there at the time of the sinking, so I know.

Your SPECIAL FEATURES are always interesting and I am beginning to like very much the personalization of your magazine that the introduction of your own thoughts and opinions have brought to OTHER WORLDS. It has always seemed to

me that a stf mag was a wonderful medium for large minded expression in all fields and therefore it is with a great deal of approval and satisfaction that I read your editorials, the Man From Tomorrow and lately your most recent addition, NEBULOSITIES. By all means keep the latter feature functioning. It's like a shot in the arm to a vitamin-deficient patient and it is an attitude such as you demonstrate that will increase the thinking efficiency of the readers of OTHER WORLDS. Everyone needs a new perspective on world concepts every now and then no matter how high or low their IQ's or individual knowledge may be. Broader perspectives, clearer thinking and individuality of ideas and concepts, with the mental horizons constantly widening and enlarging, is the true road to mental maturity, and as a result, emotional maturity, in this writer's opinion. The world in general today sadly lacks maturity of any kind. Prime nations, so important in their natural resources and their power, squabble like idiot children over a few broken toys when they should be using their intelligence to much better purposes. This is true of all the warring nations today, including America.

It's refreshing to find someone with a well-thought out opinion who isn't too weak-kneed to voice said opinion in a mature manner, irregardless of its divergence from the norm. Congratulations.

I agree with you one hundred percent on the effects of the atomic bomb dust. Ever since V-J day I've been wandering all over Amercia, Mexico and Canada and without one single exception everywhere I've gone the natives of that particular area have been loud and voluble about the fact that the weather they are experiencing is like nothing they've ever had before. Here in New Hampshire right after V-J day cloud formations were seen all over the state that were never seen before and have never been seen since. Weird sunrises and sunsets were commonplace at that time. Even at that, when I returned to New Hampshire after four years' absence, I was amazed to find the vast change in year-round weather here. The same is true all over the country.

Apradelon,
Canterbury, N. H.

Sorry I had to cut half your letter out, but you write a manuscript, not a letter! -Rap.

Thomas Granville

Germain in S. J. Byrne's "Golden Guardsmen" could effect a cause by having his thought multiplied fifty million times through his control of the flying disks from Central Control. This appears to lead into several inconsistencies with his development of the plot

Carrying this theme one step further, Germain could also have avoided the subsequent battle with the Nrlani sky city by thinking that the Nrlani were cooperative instead of subjugating — reconditioning their mentalities, if you please. Better still,

Germain could have imagined the Nrlani out of existence by thinking back to the time before their appearance, exactly as he made a dud out of the detonator on the Zero Bomb.

But, why stop there? The Nrlani already had control of the disk mentalities. Why couldn't they think Germain out of existence as soon as it became evident to them that he constituted a threat to their supremacy?

9106 43 Avenue,
Elmhurst 73, N. Y.

Aw gee, now you've explained US out of existence! But you're right, Tom. Only we hoped you wouldn't see it!—Rap.

Philip J. Castoro

I liked the October *Other Worlds*. I kind of miss the old OW with its thick, lousily printed pages and Cartier illos. Hey, you're going to keep Cartier, aren't you? Oh, and I'm glad you're beginning to have more than one illo per story. You'll notice aSF and Galaxy, as well as others often have several illos in some stories. And your new cover is really beautiful! I can see where you picked the gal for her face. She really is lovely.

Know something Ray? I'm inclined to think you have something when you so vehemently assert that the atom bomb tests are affecting the weather. Saturday night a new record for coldness was set here in Pittsburgh. It dropped to 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Last year we had a record-breaking snowfall ('50-'51), and we didn't do so bad this past winter, either. Now it's even cold in *August*, traditionally the hottest month of the year! And what about those "heavy dews" and earthquakes in California?

In regard to Joseph Semenovich's letter in the August issue where he says "The Catholic Church will be all powerful. The way I see it, it won't. More people now than ever before are drifting away from the church." Nerts! In an article in *Extension* magazine, a magazine published by the Catholic "Extension Society," Sept. '52, there is an article by Erik Von Kuehnelt-Leddhin giving reasons why the number of Catholics and so-called Orthodox Catholics, always in the majority, is on the increase. And with intelligent men like the Most Reverend Fulton J. Sheen writing such books as *Peace of Soul*, it's no wonder why the number of Catholics in this country is increasing steadily; the number, in fact has always been increasing, but whereas Bishop Sheen's television program may not be converting its entire non-Catholic audience (which is surprisingly large), it is certainly combatting that "drifting away from the church" tendency. In fact, in these days of uncertainty and insecurity, churches of all denominations are thriving.

331 Ashland Ave.,
Pittsburgh 28, Pa.

Cartier is no longer illustrating for ANYBODY. He's been hired by a commercial company and is out of science fiction. Maybe we can get him fired?—Rap.

W. M.

Some time ago I wrote—when you were asking for "charter subscribers" at $5.00 per—to indicate if they would underwrite OTHER WORLDS—remember? I never got an answer to my letter wherein I told you to go ahead and bill me for five years at the rate you suggested—think it came out to 20c per copy. I'm already a subscriber, and am going to be for quite some time, I believe. What happened to the bill? Incidentally, you might have some of your staff check the various lots of OW as they come from the printer—the September copy you mailed me had up through page 36 missing completely and about 120 on was duplicated. That's twice it's happened to me, once about a year ago. I've already bought a replacement copy—as I couldn't wait a week to get a new copy from you—the magazine is always too interesting.

Sure enough—check your files for my letter and if the 20c per copy is still good, put me down for three or four years renewal—send me the bill and I'll send check promptly. Otherwise no renewal except from year to year, of course.

Pasadena, Texas

It seems to us that several hundred of you nice people never got my letter acknowledging your offer, and informing you it was a success, and that OTHER WORLDS was going monthly as a result. It would seem that a large packet of those letters (for I did send them out!) were dumped in the garbage can instead of the mailbox by whoever did the mailing! So, not knowing who didn't receive the notice, I'm resorting to this method to inform them that the offer STILL IS OPEN to them. As a matter of fact, I've received so many letters asking if the offer is still open, that I just can't answer them all. Thus, to those of you who still wish to take part in the GO MONTHLY drive, and who wish to get OW for 20c a copy for the rest of their lives, that $5.00 for 25 issues offer is open to them, and their subscriptions will be honored by Evelyn Schaeffle, who is in charge of that list of personal friends of mine, to whom I am so indebted! However, let's set a final closing date on it, so's we can be entirely fair to everybody. Let's say that no special $5.00 subscriptions will be accepted after February 1, 1953 (this being the January issue of OW.) That should give all of you whom I seem to have ignored, somehow, a chance to have your kind offer honored. Naturally, we'll accept $5.00 subscriptions from anybody on the same basis until the closing date, in order to avoid any discrimination. But you must address your letter to either to Ray Palmer or Evelyn Schaeffle to avoid being tossed into the regular subscription basket! These special subscriber-lists have been set up separately, so that we can be sure they will always be renewable at the 20c rate, as promised.

About that faulty binding—we've corrected that now. Have you noted how firm our new binding is, how neatly it opens for ease of reading?

As for improperly numbered pages, that sometimes happens, but we always replace bad copies with good ones—simply drop us a postcard saying your copy was imperfect, we do the rest.—Rap.

John Guagliano

Awhile back you said that Other Worlds was printed on the best paper available and the thick size aided circulation. Now you changed the paper but let's keep the large size—only need 300 pages or so. I liked the cover but not stories written to fit the cover. I wonder what the model thought you were going to do with those 186 prints—if they weren't going to be used for some commercial illustrating? What were you doing in the studio while Smith was tediously taking those 186 shots—adjusting the flood lights? If you want to see the rest of Marilyn Monroe, whose picture appeared on the cover of *Quick*, I hear that there is a nude calendar which you might like to add to your collection. If you will only raise your authors rates we'll have less of those long drawn-out stories which grace OW's pages! I didn't like the 2nd installment of "These Are My Children" or the "Caravan" series, although the last was an improvement. I do enjoy the Jones' pics and your good-natured ravings. I think that "The Demolished Man" was the best stf novel of '52. It was so readable that I read the 3 installments at one sitting. After a few more years of maturity, I am sure McEvoy will regret his rash statement. What did you think of the less involved "The Lovers" by Phillip José Farmer? Most stf stories are based on Fort, notably E. F. Russell's, or Korzybski's "Science and Sanity," notably A. E. van Vogt's. What would be the source book of the future stf writers? Surprised that Lost Continents is seeing print in your mag; de Camp knocked the ground from under Shaver in "Lands Beyond."

What size should I draw my cartoons, if I send them to your mag?

1753 East 26 Street
Brooklyn 29, N. Y.

Your editor regrets exceedingly that he was not present when the 186 pictures were taken for the October cover. As for unused prints, they remain in Smith's files for possible future use. Didn't read "The Lovers" but hear it was pretty terrific. And why shouldn't we print de Camp? OW has always presented all sides fairly.—Rap.

Larry Balint

Congratulations on the new *Other Worlds*. You almost outdid yourself. That cover was great. Even better than the ones on Madge. The back cover was much better than last month. As for the stories, aren't you overdoing Shaver a bit? Two serials without a break. You should know what happens when one is given too much of a good thing.

Lost Continents was really interesting. Keep it up.

Nebulosities, eh? Now all you need is a fanzine review and you'll have

everything. How about it?

What a punch line in Fearless Fergy. It threw me from the chair in which I was reading.

Most people don't seem to realize it, but it isn't easy to produce a style of writing such as is used by T. P. Caravan. Let's have more Caravan stories.

3255 Golden Ave.
Long Beach, Calif.

Next month we'll have another T. P. Caravan story for you. As for overdoing anybody, we won't. Actually we intend to present the "story" and not the "author." In line with that wait'll you see our APRIL issue! We are actually printing 20,000 additional words in that issue, just so we can bring you a 65,000 word novel COMPLETE.—Rap.

Eddie West, Jr.

I suppose it was bound to happen sometime. I wish it hadn't. The vigorous leaders of the anti-capitalist movement have decided to move into science-fiction.

Probably they have mistaken the open-mindedness of the average science-fiction reader as a symptom of radicalism, and are planning to exploit it to the full.

How do I know all this? Well this morning I received in the mail (personally addressed) a large four-page weekly called the Industrial Worker. (Maybe some of you did too. I suppose they got my name from one of the magazines I subscribe to.) In it was a review of Gravy Planet (from *Galaxy*) and a long article on Science Fiction and the Worker. (Along with a very poor illustration and a run-of-the-mill item on space travel).

Let me quote from the article. ". . . the bomb throwing, bewhiskered character that the capitalist press would have you believe makes up the radical movement. And we know that that just ain't so."

It also says that we need a new kind of society, that "science fiction and the revolutionary working class movement have something in common," that labor is an exploited class, and that the U. S. is a semi-super-state.

There was also a plea for members for a "labor-oriented" Workers' Science Fiction Organization.

Figure out for yourself what it must be like.

Well, now that I'm through editorializing, let's get on more happy subjects, like your latest issue.

That cover is, in my opinion, the best you've had for coloring, texture, and whatever else goes into a good painting. The back cover could be better

The stories were slightly below par, but still good. I especially liked L. Sprague de Camp's story of Atlantis. The new format meets quite readily with my approval.

You and I both agree that the flying saucers are real, but you haven't said what you think they really are. I think that they are an inter-stellar observation force.

When does the Man from Tomor-

row say space travel for humans will be common? What does *he* say the flying saucers will turn out to be?

2025 N. Flower
Santa Ana, Calif

I wouldn't worry about the Communists breaking into science fiction. We just aren't interested. As for throwing bombs, maybe they don't read us very well, do they? Galaxy wouldn't print such corn! You know more about flying saucers than the experts. I don't agree that they are extra-terrestrial. They're from here, no matter how the Chicago Tribune misquoted me lately! As for what The Man From Tomorrow says about space travel, he just hasn't, yet!—Rap.

Will Brooke

It seems to me that you're unduly "hopped up" about the A-bomb tests. Here I am in Los Angeles which is practically ground zero compared with you way out there in Wisconsin and so far our rose bushes are in the pink of health. We're having our usual California summer. Those tests are necessary for the defense of the U. S. A. I think you're completely sincere about it, but if you're worried about the tiny bit of dust you get, think of the sleepless nights it must be giving old Joe and his cronies behind the iron curtain.

Your new set up is terrific. I really like that new paper and those photo-dyed covers. The best news is that L. S. de Camp is going to appear regularly for the next year. I buy any mag in which he appears as a matter of form. Looks like I might even break down and get a sub to OW. I wouldn't want to miss any installments of Atlantis. Is the book (Atlantis) already written or are you publishing each chapter as it's written? If the whole book is finished how about some de Camp fiction in the near future.

A great disappointment to me were the illos for The Sun Smiths. That Cartier was beautiful. Why didn't you let him do the whole series? That's your one weak point, illos.

I'm glad you like Mr. Neutzels paintings. I know him and have seen quite a bit of his work. He does the most beautiful detail work I've yet seen in stf.

Someday, I am going to get up enough nerve to submit one of my attempts at stf to you. I guess you've got to start getting rejected sometime.

4141 Mary Ellen Ave.
No. Hollywood, Calif.

Offhand, I'd say that what old Joe is doing behind his iron curtain is giving us some sleepless nights! But you know what the result of an arms race is—and we won't survive such a result, at least not as a nation. What I say is that both sides are being foolish. War won't solve anything. Yes, the Atlantis book is written. You can get a copy if you note the ad in this issue. We don't think we're quite so weak in illustrations now, and we KNOW we've got the problem licked for the future—watch us and see. As for rejecting you, not if it's a really good story!—Rap.

Ares Conte

One of the most interesting sections of OW—if not the most, is "Letters." It seems everybody gets his chance to ramble on about some article, idea, or other letter. I hope I get my chance.

Two types of letters are becoming repetitious and worn out, but I hope there's time to get my two cents in. The first topic is the Shaver mystery. *¿Quién Sabe?* What's with this left hook, a hangover?

The more interesting phenomena is the angle on who's mature. It seems to be just so much sophistry and self flattery. To emphasize—the subject is getting ripe! Why should such a pedantic subject crop up if it weren't for feelings of persecution and degeneration. But that is only half of it. Every literate knows what good literature is, and that is what you personally like to read. It is good only when YOU enjoy it and derive something from it.

There will be many who can't see beyond their noses, and will reject science fiction as heresy to literature. Then there are those who taste it and spit, then come the tolerators, and then the browsing reader, and finally the avid fan. In between these classifications lie many shades, but generally adhere to one of them. Each one has a perfect and sincere right to choose what he calls good literature! But none have the right to deny or sneer at another's choice. Those who do may safely be labeled as literary bigots. This class of people is a real and menacing threat to any literate generation, society, and civilization. They should not be snubbed—because fighting fire with fire only leads to a greater fire and a lot is destroyed. They should be cultivated to some point of tolerance (although I don't like that word).

The question of maturity rests only on the minds of those who feel immature and insecure. A man knows when he is mature, and reading science fiction or Pogo or anything else does not entitle you to maturity. It is something you earn all by yourself. Environment alone does not constitute maturity, and books are part of your environment. Maturity may be slightly defined as the way in which you live; how harmonious you are to your society; how you approach new and old ideas; what your moral outlook is; and from what standard you consider maturity.

Being bombastic or aloof when someone questions your actions, such as reading science fiction, is a sign of immaturity. To be mature, you have to act accordingly. Spite is for your nose.

I am also the Editor-in-Chief of the Champlain College weekly newspaper, the Champlainer. If anyone cares to answer my letter please address it to Plattsburgh, N. Y.

858-8th Ave.
New York 19, N. Y.

You just can't expect a series of stories which ran for four years and even made LIFE magazine in an 8-page feature article to just die like that, can you? Maybe that's why it

LOST CONTINENTS

"ATLANTIS"

In History, Science and Literature

By

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

"De Camp seems to make good sense, and I am lost in admiration alike of the catholic range of his researches and the boldness and decision with which he handles these sometimes thorny and sometimes nebulous questions."—Prof. Garrett Mattingly, historian

THE ATLANTIS BOOK TO END ALL ATLANTIS BOOKS!

About 375 pp., incl. 17 plates, four appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. Library binding. $6.00. Order from your local book store or from the publisher.

Get Your Copy Today

PRIME PRESS

Box 2019

Philadelphia 3, Penn.

keeps coming up. It was the big sensation of its day. The story you are reading now, BEYOND THE BARRIER, may give you an idea of some of the elements that made Shaver famous. He can write, and that's no mystery!—Rap.

Craig Sutton

Aha! Caught you in the act! Seriously, though, Rap, your bacover illos are good, though that one was slightly outré. What I meant was, the *idea* is good. Never did like those ads on a bacover . . . makes a magazine seem sorta . . . well, avaricious, only not so strong. What you need now is a *picture* of something, and everything will be jake.

As to ye editorial, I find most, if not all, of yours entertaining, and quite often right full of the proverbial food for what might pass for my thought. Yours are, in several ways, different from and better than the run-of-the-mill editorial. I, for one, can't stomach these deep things that some eds try to pass off. You keep yours in a layman's language, yet there's always something there. I just finished reading one of the best darn editorials ever. Your August ish.

No Address

Hope we can keep some food in those editorials!—Rap.

No. 9—ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

(Concluded from page 2)
pleases them they won't care a hoot if I have green hair and sleep hanging from my heels like a bat.

The important point is whether an author honestly tries to give readers full value for their hard-earned cash and not what he says and does when he gets his fist trapped in a pickle jar. And it's the gentlemen with the 35c, fans or non-fans but mostly the latter, who determine whether a yarn is good, bad or indifferent. Not you or I. So all I'd like you to do is let me tell these important people that I do continually try the best I know how. No man can do more. No woman either. Eh?

Cordially,
Eric Frank Russell.

NEBULOSITIES

(Concluded from page 145)
even open up an iron mine at 10,000 miles up if you could extract the iron from the ether that used to be so empty.

Knowledge is a thing that is undergoing constant change. What was "true" yesterday (actually it wasn't, being only our interpretation of the results of our trials and errors) is not "true" today.

The safest way, it seems to us, is to refrain from being so cocksure about things. The tendency upon reading a book is to close the covers, and there seems to be a relationship between closed covers and closed minds—once the impression is made alterations are difficult if not impossible.

PERSONALS

(Concluded from page 147)
containing Shaver stories; first 200 issues of Science Wonder Stories. Please charge what you'd like to pay. Mike Walker (no address given; phone numbers above) . . . ***Mint to good copies of mags dating back to '29. Mostly mint copies of Air Wonder, ASF, Spicy Science Fiction, Comet, FA, etc.; also hundreds of good and mint books for sale. Bob Troeschel, 1201 Carson St, Pittsburgh 3, Penna*** . . . Wanted: AS, any pre '47 issues, Jan & Nov '47, Jan, July, Oct, Nov & Dec '49. Also, subscribers to my half jokezine-half adzine, Buyem and Sellem; 5c ea. C. Anderson, 334 N 3 Ave, Apt C, Phoenix, Ariz . . . ***Would like to correspond with someone above 15 or 16 interested in playing chess by mail. Also like to know if there are any stf clubs in this area. Jacelyn Ellsworth, 744 Ganiota, Long Beach, Calif*** . . .

OTHER WORLDS

BOOK SHELF

For the convenience of readers of OTHER WORLDS, we are listing here a number of science fiction and kindred books that can be secured directly from us. If you wish any of the following titles, address your order to OTHER WORLDS Book Shelf, 806 Dempster St., Evanston, Ill. Only prepaid orders accepted. We pay postage.

WHO GOES THERE? (THE THING) — ***By John W. Campbell, Jr.***

Seven strange stories, including *Blindness*, a tale of Prometheus reborn, snatching atomic energy from the sun itself; *Twilight* and *Night*, prophetic visions of the future. $3.00

THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON — ***By Robert A. Heinlein***

The most amazing book of prophecy ever written. The first volume of the Future History series, spanning the years of the near future. $3.00

SPACE ON MY HANDS — ***By Frederic Brown***

Nine of the best stories of this well known writer including *Pi In The Sky, Nothing Sirius, Crisis, 1999, The Star Mouse.* Humor as you'll like it. $2.50

THE WHEELS OF IF — ***By L. Sprague de Camp***

Meet *The Gnarly Man*, an immortal Neanderthal pursued by a man-crazy female anthropologist: *The Warrior Race*, Spartan Supermen seduced on a wanton world; *Hyperpelosity*, where a strange mutation makes clothing obsolete. $3.00

KINSMEN OF THE DRAGON — ***By Stanley Mullen***

An original science-fantasy novel, never before published. Contains such chapters as *Trail of the Wizard, Votaries of Ys, Darla of the Seagreen Eyes, The Black Tower*, 26 thrilling chapters in all. $3.50

SIDEWISE IN TIME — ***By Murray Leinster***

The cream of the writings of America's favorite fiction author, including *Proxima Centauri, The Fourth Dimensional Demonstrator*, and many others. $3.00

THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH — ***By Robert A. Heinlein***

The second volume in the Future History series, with *Rhysling, The Blind Singer*, and the adventure of the entire solar system. $3.00

BEYOND THESE WALLS **By Rena M. Vale**

A tremendous novel of passion and conflict in the world of the future. The surprise "science-fiction" find of the year. (Not yet issued) $3.50

CLOAK OF AESIR **By John W. Campbell, Jr.**

The second great collection of "Don A. Stuart" stories, including the *Aesir* series, the *Machine* trilogy, and the memorable *Forgetfulness*. $3.00

MURDER IN MILLENNIUM VI **By Curme Gray**

Brand new original novel presenting an entirely new aspect of science-fiction writing. $3.00

THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES: 1951 **By Bleiler & Dikty**

The third in this series of the best science-fiction stories of each year. Contains a bumper crop of 18 tales. $2.95

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF

OTHER WORLDS, published monthly at Evanston, Illinois, for October 1, 1952.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:
Publisher: Clark Publishing Company, 806 Dempster St., Evanston, Ill.
Editor: Raymond A. Palmer, Amherst, Wisconsin.
Managing Editor: Beatrice Mahaffey, 1210 Simpson St., Evanston, Ill.
Business Manager: None.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.)
Clark Publishing Company, 806 Dempster St., Evanston, Ill.
Curtis Fuller, 200 Wood Ct., Wilmette, Ill.
Mary Margaret Fuller, 200 Wood Ct., Wilmette, Ill.
Raymond A. Palmer, Amherst, Wisconsin.
Marjorie Palmer, Amherst, Wisconsin.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

Curtis Fuller, President.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1952.

[SEAL] BETTY LOU MUNSON.

(My commission expires March 10, 1954.)

WHY WALK A

CROOKED MILE?

Or Any Mile At All?

For

OTHER WORLDS

When you can have it delivered right to your door, even before the newsstand gets it, in perfect condition in a heavy envelope; and in addition enjoy a saving of 10¢ per copy!

Give your feet — and your pocketbook! — a break.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

And let Uncle Sam do the legwork.

MAIL YOUR REMITTANCE TO

Clark Publishing Company, 806 Dempster Street, Evanston, Ill

.....

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY .....

ZONE ..... State .....

I wish to subscribe to OTHER WORLDS for (check square):

☐ 12 issues $3.00 ☐ 24 issues $6.00

Enclosed is ☐ cash ☐ check ☐ money order for $.....

Begin my subscription with the.....Issue.

Check here if this is a renewal subscription ☐

25 Printed in the U.S.A.

FRUSTRATED?

MENTALLY tired? Lack energy? Tied by circumstances? SNAP THE CHAINS THAT BIND YOU! You can, with this proved SUCCESS Plan. And you can test it *free!*

No need to stand disillusioned on the fringes of life whilst others forge ahead. YOU have the same equipment as they. *Learn how to develop it efficiently, and enjoy real success!* In a few weeks you will feel happier, healthier, more alert—able to grasp instantly the opportunities which you previously passed by. The secret of this combined mental and physical development is YOGISM. Simply, naturally, it teaches you how to draw on an inexhaustible supply of power within you and so revitalize your whole system.

YOGISM frees you from

INDECISION

LACK OF ENERGY

AIMLESSNESS

MENTAL TIREDNESS

YOGISM TEACHES YOU

- **Deep relaxation,** soothing away your fears and tensions
- **Deep concentration,** helping keep your body trim and strong.
- **Dynamic concentration,** enabling you to pinpoint your mind, tackle any task
- **Dynamic breathing,** revitalizing and rejuvenating your whole system.

FREE TRIAL LESSON

Send only 25 cents to cover cost of mailing and handling and the first lesson in this splendid course will be sent to you free. Read it, do what it says, turn frustration and failure to success! Don't delay. Write NOW.

School of Yoga
Department Fe-2
1144 Ashland Avenue, Evanston, Illinois

I enclose 25c to cover cost of mailing and handling. Please send me FREE TRIAL LESSON, absolutely without obligation.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... ZONE..... STATE.....